THE
ANCHOR
BIBLE

NUMBERS 21-36

A NEW TRANSLATION
WITH
INTRODUCTION AND COMMENTARY BY

BARUCH A. LEVINE

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William Foxwell Albright
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GENERAL EDITORS

THE ANCHOR BIBLE

NUMBERS
21–36

◆

A New Translation
with
Introduction and Commentary

BARUCH A. LEVINE

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To my wife,
Corinne

Enjoy happiness with a woman you love
all the fleeting days of your life—
—Koheleth 9:9

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PREFACE

◆

It is once again a pleasure to acknowledge my indebtedness to several persons and agencies whose assistance made it possible for me to accomplish the present work, thereby completing the translation and commentary to the Book of Numbers. *Numbers 1–20* appeared in 1993, and it has taken the years since then to prepare *Numbers 21–36.* I begin by expressing gratitude for the informative critique of Numbers 21 provided by Randall Younker of Andrews University. Early on, I was fortunate to be able to tap the expertise of James Sauer for insight into the archaeological history of Transjordan. Numerous other scholars in North America, Europe and Israel have been helpful, and I owe much to the archaeologists, historians and epigraphists, Jordanians and others, who have contributed so much to our understanding of Numbers 21–36. As always, I thank my students at New York University, and audiences at scholarly meetings, for their stimulating questions and responses. The exceptional commentary to Numbers by George Buchanan Gray, written at the beginning of the century, has been my anchor and compass.

My long association with New York University, and membership in its Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies, have advanced my research interests. The Department's chairman during the last number of years, Robert Chazan, and my colleagues in the department and in the university administration, have consistently appreciated the need for substantial periods of leave for purposes of research. I am grateful to my gifted student, Lauren Shedletzky, who prepared the Reference Bibliography. The staff of the great library of The École Biblique, Jerusalem, and the good colleagues of the École, once again deserve recognition for their friendship and assistance.

My editor, colleague and mentor, David Noel Freedman, always deeply committed to his authors, provided valuable scholarly critique, preserving me from countless errors and raising important questions. Dr. Mark Fretz and Andrew Corbin and their staffs at Doubleday have been exceedingly helpful and efficient in bringing this work to publication. The *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, another project directed by David Noel Freedman, was exceedingly useful, allowing me to refer the reader to authoritative and updated information.

This work is dedicated to my wife, Corinne, as was the former volume. Corinne continues to encourage me in my work, and seems always to appreciate how fulfilling it is for me. I can only hope that it will prove significant for others, as well. I have always been guided by the words of the Morning Benedictions: "Oh Lord, our God! Please make the words of your Torah sweet in our mouths."

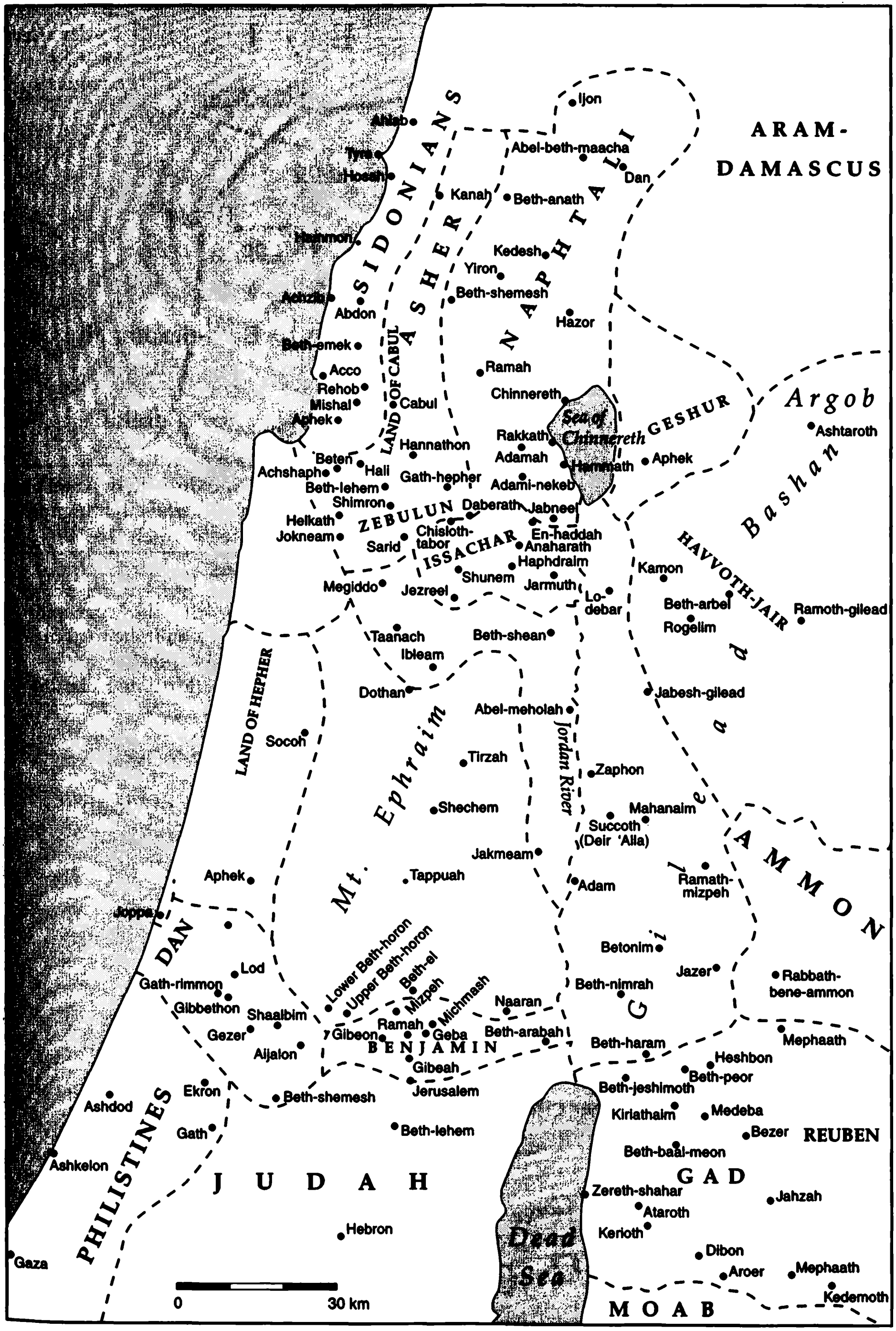
A note about the translation of the biblical text is in order at the outset. As in *Numbers 1–20*, the Masoretic Text serves as the basis of my translation. Brackets are used to set off words added to the translation to facilitate a smooth English rendering, but which do not actually appear in the Hebrew text. This convention should not be confused with the use of brackets to indicate the presence of lacunae in manuscripts or other primary texts (e.g., Phoenician texts, or texts from Deir ʿAlla).

ABBREVIATIONS

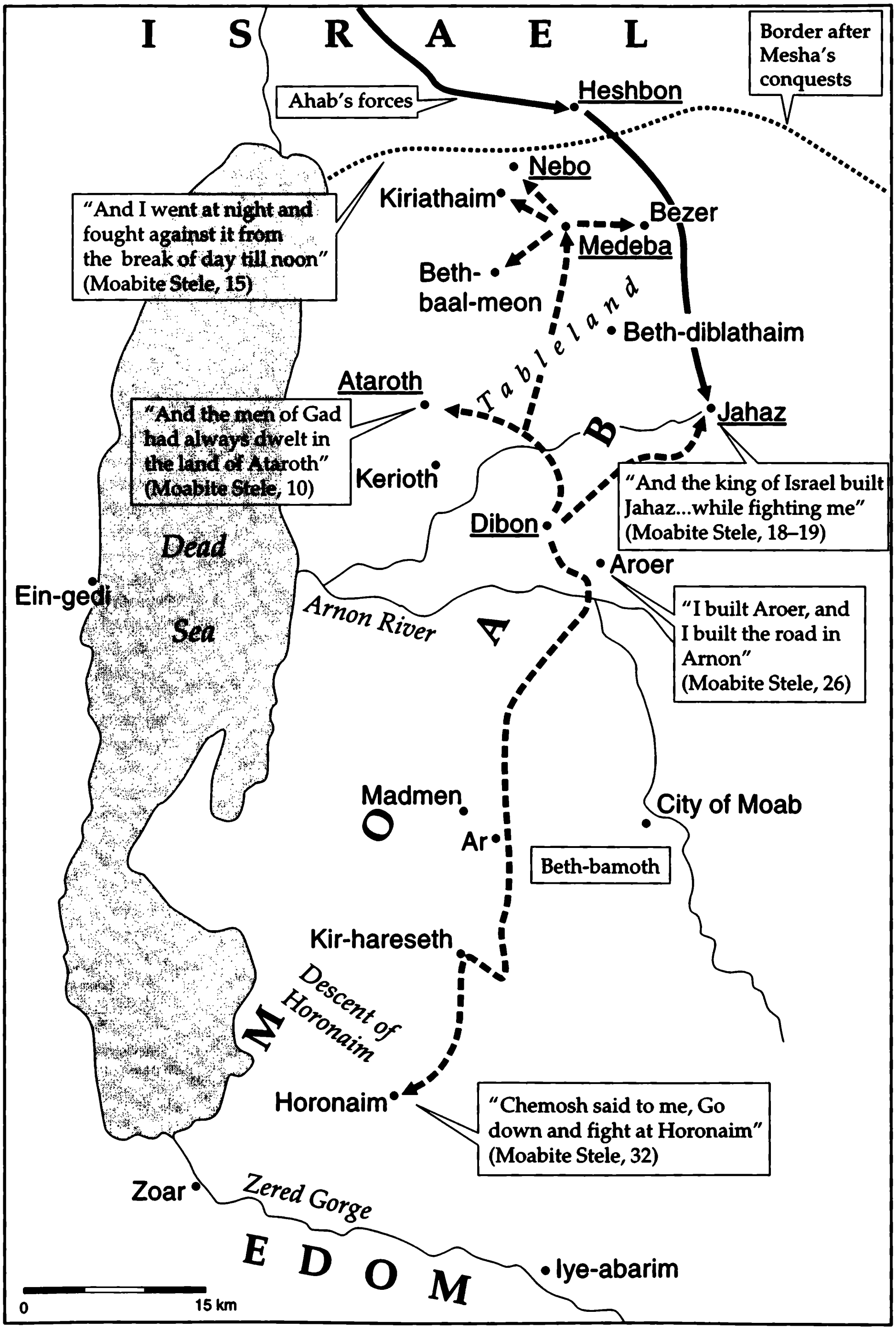
◆

AASOR	*Annual, American Schools of Oriental Research.*
ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary,* 6 vols., New York, 1992.
AHw	*Akkadisches Handwörterbuch,* ed. W. von Soden, 3 vols. Wiesbaden, 1965–1981.
ANET	*Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament,* 3rd ed. with suppl., ed. J. P. Pritchard, Princeton, 1969.
AUSS	*Andrews University Seminar Studies,* Berrien Springs, MI.
BA	*Biblical Archaelogist.*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research.*
Britannica, Micropaedia	*Encyclopaedia Britannica, Micropaedia,* 10 vols. 1975, by Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. Chicago: Benton Publishers.
CAD	*The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly.*
DJD	Discoveries in the Judean Desert.
EA	J. A. Knudtzon, *Die El Amarna Tafeln* (Neudruck der Ausgabe 1915). Aalen: Otto Zeller, 2 vols.
EB	*Encylopaedia Biblica/Ensiqlopediah Miqra'it* (Hebrew), Jerusalem, 8 vols.
EI	*Eretz-Israel,* Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society.
Eusebius, *Onomasticon*	Eusebius, Pamphili 1966 Edition: *Das Onomsaticon der Biblischen Ortsnamen,* G. Olms Verlag.
Gray-ICC	G. B. Gray, *Numbers. International Critical Commentary.* Edinburgh, 1903.
HALAT	*Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament,* ed. W. Baumngartner, et al.
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual,* Cincinnati.
IEJ	*Israel Exploration Journal,* Jerusalem.
JANES	*Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University,* New York.

JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society.*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature.*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies.*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies.*
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review.*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament,* Sheffield.
JSOT Suppl.	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series.
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies.*
KTU$_2$	*The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras ibn Hani and Other Places* (KTU: second, enlarged edition), ed. M. Dietrich, et al. Munster, 1995.
LXX	*Septuaginta,* ed. A. Rahlfs. Stuttgart: Privilegierta Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1952.
NEAE	*The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land,* 4 vols. Ed. E. Stern, et al. Jerusalem, 1993.
NJPS	*New Jewish Publication Society Version (TANAKH).*
PEQ	*Palestine Exploration Quarterly,* London.
RB	*Revue Biblique,* Paris.
VT	*Vetus Testamentum.*
VT Suppl.	Vetus Testamentum Supplements.
UF	*Ugarit-Forschungen.*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die altemestamentliche Wissenschaft.*
ZDMG	*Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenlandischen Gesellschaft.*
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins.*


Ijon
ARAM-
DAMASCUS
Ahlab
Tyre
Hosah
SIDONIANS
ASHER
NAPHTALI
Abel-beth-maacha
Dan
Kanah
Beth-anath
Hammon
Kedesh
Yiron
Beth-shemesh
Achzib
Abdon
Hazor
Beth-emek
LAND OF CABUL
Acco
Ramah
Rehob
Mishal
Cabul
Chinnereth
Aphek
Sea of Chinnereth
GESHUR
Argob
Ashtaroth
Hannathon
Rakkath
Beten
Adamah
Hammath
Aphek
Achshaph
Hali
Gath-hepher
Adami-nekeb
Beth-lehem
Bashan
Shimron
ZEBULUN
Daberath
Jabneel
Helkath
Jokneam
Sarid
Chisloth-tabor
ISSACHAR
En-haddah
Anaharath
HAVVOTH-JAIR
Haphdraim
Kamon
Shunem
Megiddo
Jezreel
Jarmuth
Lo-debar
Beth-arbel
Ramoth-gilead
Rogelim
Taanach
Beth-shean
Ibleam
LAND OF HEPHER
Dothan
Jabesh-gilead
Abel-meholah
Gilead
Socoh
Tirzah
Jordan River
Zaphon
Mt. Ephraim
Shechem
Mahanaim
Succoth
(Deir 'Alla)
AMMON
Jakmeam
Aphek
Tappuah
Adam
Ramath-mizpeh
Joppa
DAN
Betonim
Lod
Lower Beth-horon
Upper Beth-horon
Beth-el
Jazer
Rabbath-bene-ammon
Gath-rimmon
Mizpeh
Michmash
Beth-nimrah
Gibbethon
Shaalbim
Naaran
Gezer
Gibeon
Ramah
Geba
Beth-arabah
Beth-haram
Mephaath
Aijalon
BENJAMIN
Heshbon
Gibeah
Beth-peor
Ekron
Jerusalem
Beth-jeshimoth
Ashdod
Beth-shemesh
Kiriathaim
Medeba
PHILISTINES
Beth-lehem
Bezer
REUBEN
Gath
Beth-baal-meon
Ashkelon
GAD
JUDAH
Zereth-shahar
Jahzah
Ataroth
Kerioth
Hebron
Dead Sea
Dibon
Gaza
Aroer
Mephaath
0
30 km
MOAB
Kedemoth

Israel on both sides of the Jordan and in the Bashan


ISRAEL
Border after Mesha's conquests
Ahab's forces
Heshbon
Nebo
Kiriathaim
Bezer
Medeba
Beth-baal-meon
Tableland
Beth-diblathaim
Ataroth
Jahaz
Kerioth
Dibon
Aroer
Dead Sea
Ein-gedi
Arnon River
MOAB
Madmen
Ar
City of Moab
Beth-bamoth
Kir-hareseth
Descent of Horonaim
Horonaim
Zoar
Zered Gorge
EDOM
Iye-abarim
0
15 km

"And I went at night and fought against it from the break of day till noon" (Moabite Stele, 15)

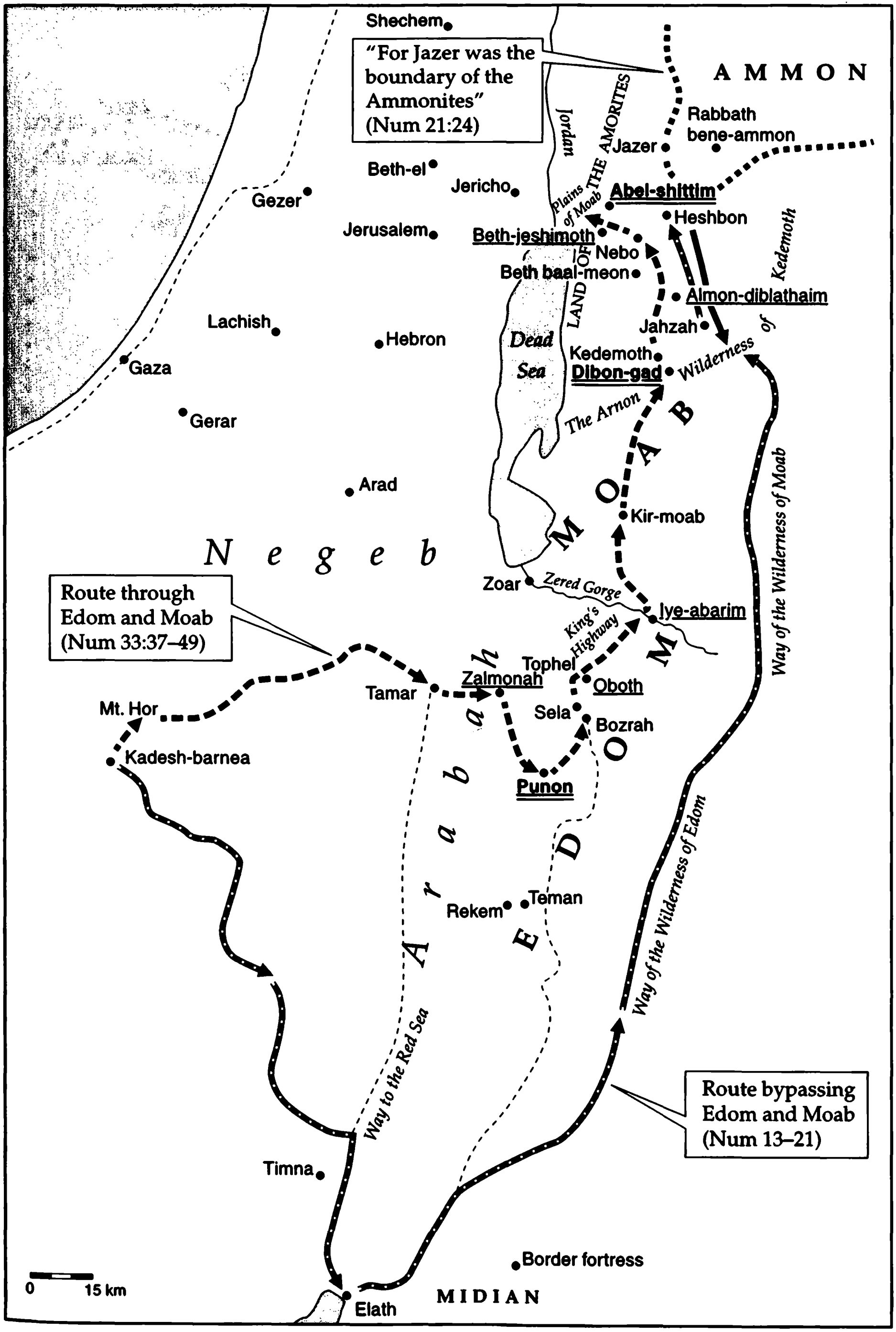
"And the men of Gad had always dwelt in the land of Ataroth" (Moabite Stele, 10)

"And the king of Israel built Jahaz...while fighting me" (Moabite Stele, 18–19)

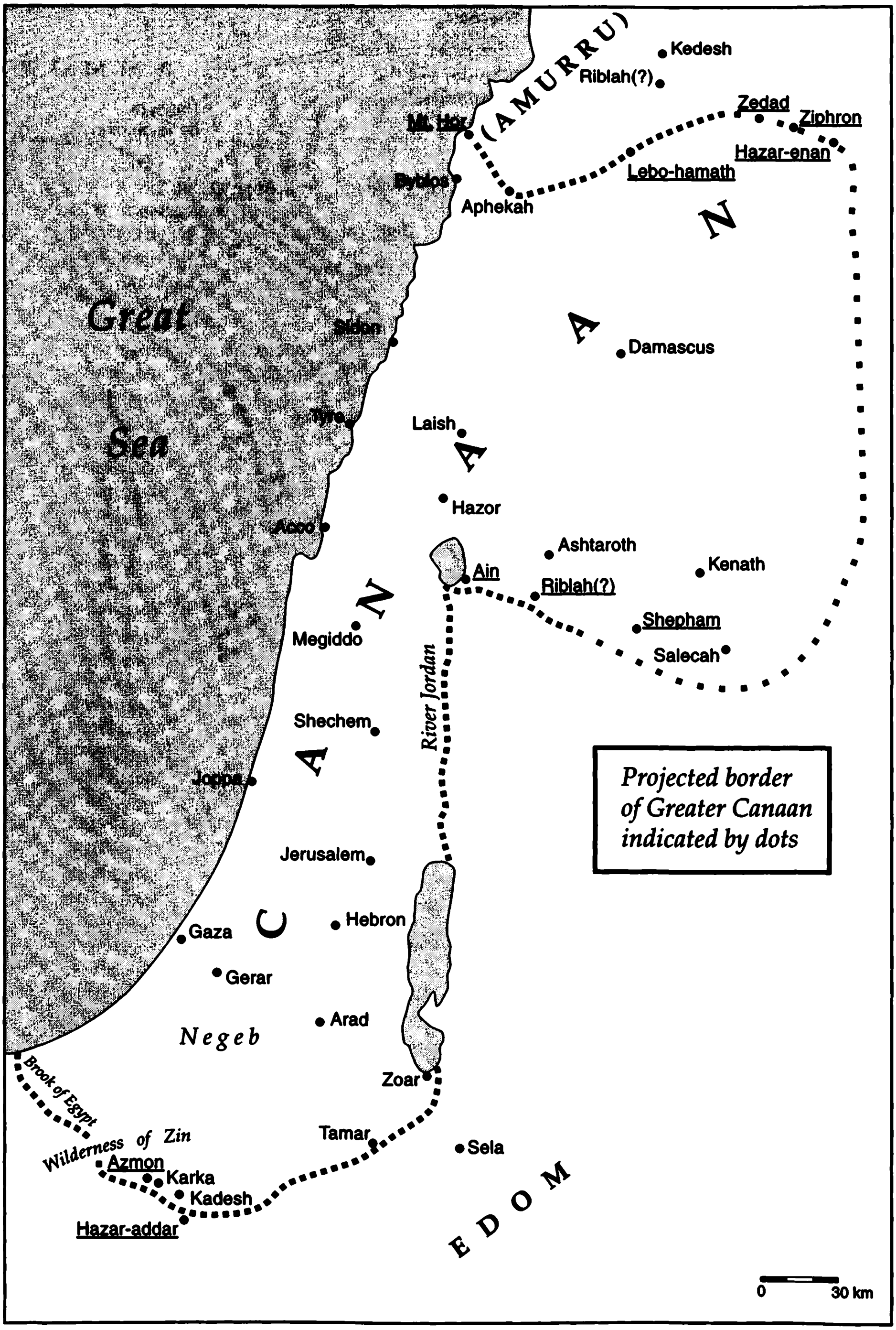
"I built Aroer, and I built the road in Arnon" (Moabite Stele, 26)

"Chemosh said to me, Go down and fight at Horonaim" (Moabite Stele, 32)

Evidence from the Moabite Stele on Numbers 21


Shechem
"For Jazer was the boundary of the Ammonites" (Num 21:24)
AMMON
Jordan
THE AMORITES
LAND OF
Rabbath bene-ammon
Jazer
Beth-el
Jericho
Gezer
Plains of Moab
Abel-shittim
Heshbon
Jerusalem
Beth-jeshimoth
Nebo
Beth baal-meon
Wilderness of Kedemoth
Almon-diblathaim
Lachish
Hebron
Jahzah
Dead Sea
Kedemoth
Dibon-gad
Gaza
Gerar
The Arnon
MOAB
Arad
Kir-moab
Negeb
Route through Edom and Moab (Num 33:37–49)
Zoar
Zered Gorge
Iye-abarim
King's Highway
Way of the Wilderness of Moab
Tophel
Zalmonah
Oboth
Tamar
Mt. Hor
Sela
Bozrah
Kadesh-barnea
Punon
Arabah
EDOM
Way of the Wilderness of Edom
Rekem
Teman
Way to the Red Sea
Route bypassing Edom and Moab (Num 13–21)
Timna
Border fortress
0 15 km
MIDIAN
Elath

Two alternative routes from Kadesh to the Plains of Moab (Numbers 13–21 versus Numbers 33:37–49)


(AMURRU)
Kedesh
Riblah(?)
Mt. Hor
Zedad
Ziphron
Hazar-enan
Lebo-hamath
Byblos
Aphekah
N
Great
Sea
Sidon
A
Damascus
Tyre
Laish
A
Hazor
Acco
Ashtaroth
Ain
Kenath
Riblah(?)
N
Shepham
Megiddo
Salecah
River Jordan
Shechem
A
Joppa
Projected border of Greater Canaan indicated by dots
Jerusalem
C
Hebron
Gaza
Gerar
Arad
Negeb
Zoar
Brook of Egypt
Wilderness of Zin
Tamar
Sela
Azmon
Karka
Kadesh
Hazar-addar
EDOM
0
30 km

Greater Canaan (Numbers 34:1–12)

TRANSLATION OF NUMBERS 21–36

◆

21 [1]The Canaanite, the king of Arad, resident of the Negeb, heard that the Israelites were approaching by the Atharim road. He did battle with Israel, and took some of him captive.

[2]Israel then vowed a vow to YHWH, and said: "If you deliver this people into my power, I shall proscribe their towns as *ḥērem.*"

[3]YHWH acceded to the wishes of Israel and delivered the Canaanites. They, together with their towns, were proscribed as *ḥērem,* and that site was [accordingly] named Hormah.

[4]They marched *from Mount Hor* by way of the Sea of Reeds, so as to circumvent the land of Edom. The mood of the people became impatient on the way.

[5]The people spoke out against God and against Moses: "Why did you make us leave Egypt only to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our inwards loathe this putrid bread!"

[6]Thereupon, YHWH dispatched *śārāp*-serpents against the people, and they bit the people so that a multitude of Israelites died.

[7]The people approached Moses and declared: "We have indeed been disloyal in speaking against YHWH and against you. Petition YHWH to remove the serpents from us." So, Moses made petition on behalf of the people.

[8]YHWH then instructed Moses: Fashion a *śārāp*-serpent and place it atop a standard. So will it be that when anyone who is bitten gazes upon it, he will survive.

[9]Accordingly, Moses fashioned a serpent of bronze, and placed it atop a standard. So it was, that if a serpent had bitten a person, he would look at the bronze serpent and survive.

[10]The Israelites set out on the march, and encamped at Oboth.

[11]From Oboth they marched on, encamping at Iyye-Abarim in the wilderness, facing Moab from the rising of the sun.

[12]From there, they continued on their march, encamping at Zered Gorge.

[13]They continued their march from that point, encamping across the Arnon, in the wilderness extending from the territory of the Amorites. For the Arnon represents the boundary of Moab, dividing Moab from the territory of the Amorites.

[14]On this very matter was it stated in the Chronicle of the Wars of YHWH:

אֶת־וָהֵב בְּסוּפָה וְאֶת־הַנְּחָלִים,
אַרְנוֹן וְאֶשֶׁד הַנְּחָלִים.
אֲשֶׁר נָטָה לְשֶׁבֶת עָר, וְנִשְׁעַן לִגְבוּל מוֹאָב.

At Waheb in Suphah, and at the wadis;
[At] the Arnon [15]and the cataract of the wadis.
Where it bends to the settlement of Ar, and leans toward the boundary of Moab.

[16]From that point to Beer, the very spring where YHWH had instructed Moses: Assemble the people and I will provide them with water.

[17]It was then that Israel sang this song:

"עֲלִי בְאֵר!" עֱנוּ לָהּ.
בְּאֵר חֲפָרוּהָ שָׂרִים, כָּרוּהָ נְדִיבֵי הָעָם.
בִּמְחֹקְק[ם] כְּמִשְׁעֲנֹתָם.

"Surge, oh well!"—*they sang* to it.
[18a]Oh well that the commanders delved, that the knights of the fighting force dug;
Along with magistrate[s], bearing their scepters.

[18b–19]From the desert to Mattanah, and from Mattanah to Nahliel, and from Nahliel to Bamoth.

[20]And from Bamoth to the valley located in the open country of Moab, to the peak of the summit overlooking the wasteland.

[21]The Israelites then dispatched messengers to Sihon, the king of the Amorites, with the following message:

[22]"I wish to traverse your land. We will not turn aside to enter any field or vineyard, nor will we drink well water. We will keep to the King's Highway until we have traversed your territory."

[23]But Sihon would not permit the Israelites to traverse his territory, and mustered his entire force. He set out into the wilderness to do battle with the Israelites. He arrived at Jahaz, and did battle with the Israelites.

[24]The Israelites slew his forces by the blade of the sword, and took possession of his land, from the Arnon to the Jabbok, up to [the border] of the Ammonites; for the border of the Ammonites was strongly fortified.

[25]The Israelites captured all of these towns. The Israelites settled in all of the Amorite towns, including Heshbon and all its dependencies.

[26]For Heshbon was the capital of Sihon, the king of the Amorites. He had fought against the earlier Moabite king and seized all of his land from his jurisdiction, up to the Arnon.

[27a]It is regarding this that the composers of *mešālîm* recited:

בֹּאוּ חֶשְׁבּוֹן־תִּבָּנֶה, וְתִכּוֹנֵן עִיר סִיחוֹן.
כִּי־אֵשׁ יָצְאָה מֵחֶשְׁבּוֹן, לֶהָבָה מִקִּרְיַת סִיחֹן.
אָכְלָה עָר מוֹאָב, *בָּמוֹת־בַּעַל אַרְנֹן*.

אוֹי־לְךָ מוֹאָב! אָבַדְתָּ עַם־כְּמוֹשׁ!
נָתַן בָּנָיו פְּלֵיטִם, וּבְנֹתָיו בַּשְּׁבִית,
[לְמֶלֶךְ אֱמֹרִי סִיחוֹן]
וְנִינָם אָבַד, חֶשְׁבּוֹן עַד־דִּיבוֹן,
וְנָשַּׁמ[וּ] עַד־נֹפַח, אֲשֶׁר עַד־מֵידְבָא.

[27b]Come to Heshbon; how it is fortified! How firmly founded is Sihon's town!
[28]For fire blazed from Heshbon, flame from Sihon's capital;
It consumed Ar of Moab, *Bamoth-Baal-on-Arnon.*
[29]Woe unto you, Moab! You have vanished, people of Kemosh!
His sons were delivered as fugitives, his daughters into captivity.
To the Amorite king, Sihon
[30]*Their posterity* has vanished, from Heshbon all the way to Dibon;
They are devastated down to Nophah, located near Medeba.

[31]The Israelites settled in the land of the Amorites.

[32]Then Moses dispatched [men] to scout Jazer, and they captured its dependencies, dispossessing the Amorites who had been there.

[33]Then they turned northward by way of the Bashan. Og, the king of the Bashan, came out to face them, he and his entire force, to do battle at Edrei.

[34]YHWH said to Moses: Have no fear of him, for I will deliver him into your power; him and his entire force and his entire land. You will do to him just as you did to Sihon, the king of the Amorites, who ruled in Heshbon.

[35]They slew him and his sons and his entire force, until no survivor was left to him, and they took possession of his land.

22 [1]The Israelites marched on, and encamped in the Plains of Moab, across the Jordan from Jericho.

[2]Now, Balak, the son of Zippor, observed all that the Israelites had wrought upon the Amorites.

[3]The Moabites were in deep dread of the people, for they were so numerous. The Moabites were fearful at the sight of the Israelites.

[4]Then the Moabites said *to the Midianite elders*: "The next thing you know, this mass of people will chew up all our environs, as an ox chews up the vegetation of the field!" Now, Balak, the son of Zippor, was king over Moab at that time.

[5]He dispatched emissaries to Balaam, the son of Beor, at Pethor, which lies on the river, in the land of the *Ammonites*, to invite him. They brought the following message: "Observe how this people, after leaving Egypt, has covered the face of the land and is now encamped opposite me.

[6]"Now then: Proceed to pronounce execrations for me against this people, for he is more numerous than I. Perhaps I may then be capable of striking him, and driving him out of the land. For I know that whomever you bless is blessed, and whomever you curse is accursed."

[7]The Moabite elders departed together with the Midianite elders, bearing with them payment for divination. They approached Balaam, and related to him the words of Balak.

[8]He said to them: "Spend the night here, and I will issue you a reply according to what YHWH communicates to me." The Moabite chieftains remained with Balaam.

[9]God came to Balaam, and He said: Who are these men with you?

[10]Balaam replied to God: "Balak, the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent the following message to me:

[11]'Observe how the people that went forth from Egypt has covered the face of the land. Proceed, now, to pronounce execrations for me against him. Perhaps I may prevail over him in battle and drive him out.' "

[12]Thereupon God said to Balaam: Do not accompany them. You may not curse this people, for it has been blessed.

[13]Balaam arose on the morrow and addressed himself to Balak's chieftains: "Return to your land, for YHWH has refused to allow me to accompany you."

[14]Thereupon, the Moabite chieftains set out, and returned to Balak with the message: "Balaam has refused to accompany us."

[15]Balak persisted in dispatching chieftains, of even greater status than these.

[16]They approached Balaam and said to him: "Thus spoke Balak, the son of Zippor: "Do not be prevented from coming to me;

[17]'For I shall reward you exceedingly. Whatever you require of me I shall provide. But, I pray, go, pronounce execrations for me against that people!' "

[18]Balaam responded by saying to Balak's courtiers: "Even if Balak were to lavish on me all the silver and gold that his palace contains I could not transgress the edict of YHWH, my God, by doing anything at all.

[19]"Now then, as for you—you remain lodged here tonight, as well, until I am apprised of what God may further instruct me."

[20]God came to Balaam during the night and said to him: If, indeed, these men have come to invite you, go along with them. But only the oracle that I communicate to you, such may you perform.

[21]So Balaam arose on the morrow, saddled his jenny, and accompanied the Moabite chieftains.

[22]God became enraged that he was undertaking the journey. The angel of YHWH stationed himself on the road, confronting him as an adversary while he rode along on his jenny, accompanied by his two squires.

[23]When the jenny saw the angel of YHWH stationed on the road, with his sword unsheathed in his hand, she swerved from the road and went into the field. Balaam struck the jenny to bring her back to the road.

[24]The angel of YHWH then halted in the narrow path of the vineyards, fenced in on both sides.

[25]Upon seeing the angel of YHWH, the jenny pressed herself against the fence, squeezing Balaam's leg against the fence. He continued to strike her.

[26]The angel of YHWH continued to move on, and halted in a narrow space with no room to move aside either to the right or to the left.

[27]When the jenny saw the angel of YHWH she crouched down under Balaam. Thereupon, Balaam became enraged and struck the jenny with the rod.

[28]YHWH opened the jenny's mouth, so that she spoke to Balaam: "What have I done to you, that you should strike me these three times?"

[29]Whereupon, Balaam said to the jenny: "Because you have tormented me. Would that I held a sword in my hand, for I would promptly slay you!"

[30]But the jenny said to Balaam: "Am I not your very own jenny, whom you have ridden from your first days until now? Have I ever before sought to gain an advantage by behaving toward you in such a manner?" He replied: "No."

[31]At that moment YHWH uncovered Balaam's eyes, so that he, too, saw the angel of YHWH stationed in the path, with his sword unsheathed in his hand. He bowed prostrate on his face.

[32]The angel of YHWH said to him: Why have you struck your jenny these three times? It was I, after all, who came forth as an adversary, for the mission was pressing upon me.

[33]When the jenny saw me, she dodged me three times. Had she not dodged me, it is you I would have surely slain, and I would have allowed her to remain alive.

[34]Balaam said to the angel of YHWH: "I have offended! I did not know that you were confronting me on the road. Now, then, if you disapprove, I shall be on my way back."

[35]But the angel of YHWH said to Balaam: Go with these men, but only the oracle that I communicate to you, such may you speak. So, Balaam accompanied Balak's chieftains.

[36]When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to greet him at Ir of Moab, which is on the border marked by the Arnon, [and] which is at the [nearest] extremity of the border.

[37]Balak said to Balaam: "Did I not send you an urgent message inviting you? Why did you not come to me? Am I not really capable of rewarding you?"

[38]Then Balaam said to Balak: "Behold, I have come to you. Now then: Can I really make any pronouncement? Only the oracle that God places in my mouth, such may I speak."

[39]Thereupon Balaam accompanied Balak, and they arrived at Kiriath-Huzoth.

[40]Balak sacrificed oxen and sheep, distributing them to Balaam and to the chieftains who were with him.

[41]When morning came, Balak took Balaam up to Bamoth-Baal. From there he beheld the [nearest] extremity of the people.

23 [1]Then Balaam said to Balak: "Build me at this site seven altars, and prepare for me at this site seven bulls and seven rams."

[2]Balak did as Balaam instructed, and Balak and Balaam offered up a bull and a ram on each altar.

[3]Balaam then said to Balak: "Station yourself near your burnt offering, while I move about. Perhaps YHWH will take the occasion to encounter me, and reveal some word to me of which I may inform you." He walked away silently.

[4]God did take the occasion to encounter Balaam, and *the latter* said to him: "I have set up the seven altars and have offered up a bull and a ram on each altar."

[5]YHWH placed a word in Balaam's mouth, and instructed him: Return to Balak and speak accordingly.

[6]He returned to him, and behold, he was stationed near his burnt offering, he and all the chieftains of Moab.

[7]In a raised voice he recited his balanced verse, speaking:

מִן־אֲרָם יַנְחֵנִי בָלָק, מֶלֶךְ־מוֹאָב מֵהַרְרֵי־קֶדֶם.
לְכָה אָרָה־לִּי יַעֲקֹב, וּלְכָה זֹעֲמָה יִשְׂרָאֵל.
מָה אֶקֹּב לֹא קַבֹּה אֵל, וּמָה אֶזְעֹם לֹא זָעַם יהוה?
כִּי־מֵרֹאשׁ צֻרִים אֶרְאֶנּוּ, וּמִגְּבָעוֹת אֲשׁוּרֶנּוּ,
הֶן־עָם לְבָדָד יִשְׁכֹּן וּבַגּוֹיִם לֹא יִתְחַשָּׁב.

מִי מָנָה עֲפַר יַעֲקֹב, וּמִ(י) סָפַר אֶת־רֹבַע יִשְׂרָאֵל?
תָּמֹת נַפְשִׁי מוֹת יְשָׁרִים, וּתְהִי אַחֲרִיתִי כָּמֹהוּ.

"From Aram did Balak import me; the king of Moab—from the mountains of Qedem.
Come, execrate Jacob for me; and come, pronounce Israel's doom!
[8]How can I curse whom El has not condemned, and how can I doom whom YHWH has not doomed?
[9]As I behold him from mountain tops, and as I gaze upon him from hills;
It is truly a people encamped apart, and unallied with other nations.
[10]Who can chart the terrain of Jacob, and who can measure Israel's quarterland?
May I die the death of the valiant, and let my afterlife be as his!"

[11]Then Balak said to Balaam: "What have you done to me? I engaged you to maledict my enemies, but, behold, you have most surely pronounced blessings!"

[12]He answered saying: "Is it not what YHWH places in my mouth that I must take care to speak?"

[13]Balak said to him: "Come, now, with me to another site, from where you can see him. You will be able to see only the [nearest] edge of him, but you will not see all of him. Maledict him for me from there."

[14]So he took him to Lookout Plateau, to the peak of Pisgah, where he built seven altars and offered up a bull and a ram on each altar.

[15]He said to Balak: "Station yourself here near your burnt offering, and as for me, I will seek an occasional encounter hereabouts."

[16]YHWH took the occasion to encounter Balaam, and placed an oracle in his mouth, and instructed him: Return to Balak and speak accordingly.

[17]He came upon him, and behold, he was stationed near his burnt offering in the company of the Moabite chieftains. Then Balak addressed him: "What has YHWH spoken?"

[18]In a raised voice he recited his balanced verse, speaking:

קוּם בָּלָק וּשֲׁמָע! הַאֲזִינָה עָדַי בְּנוֹ צִפֹּר!
לֹא אִישׁ אֵל וִיכַזֵּב, וּבֶן־אָדָם וְיִתְנֶחָם.
הַהוּא אָמַר וְלֹא יַעֲשֶׂה, וְדִבֶּר וְלֹא יְקִימֶנָּה?
הִנֵּה בָרֵךְ לָקָחְתִּי וּבָרֵךְ וְלֹא אֲשִׁיבֶנָּה.
לֹא־הִבִּיט אָוֶן בְּיַעֲקֹב, וְלֹא־רָאָה עָמָל בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל.

יהוה אֱלֹהָיו עִמּוֹ, וּתְרוּעַת מֶלֶךְ בּוֹ.
אֵל מוֹצִיאָם מִמִּצְרָיִם כְּתוֹעֲפֹת רְאֵם לוֹ.
כִּי לֹא־נַחַשׁ בְּיַעֲקֹב, וְלֹא־קֶסֶם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל.
כָּעֵת יֵאָמֵר לְיַעֲקֹב, וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל מַה־פָּעַל אֵל.
הֶן־עָם כְּלָבִיא יָקוּם, וְכַאֲרִי יִתְנַשָּׂא.
לֹא יִשְׁכַּב עַד־יֹאכַל טֶרֶף, וְדַם־חֲלָלִים יִשְׁתֶּה.

Arise Balak, take heed! Give ear to me, Zippor's own son!
[19]El is no human that he would fail, nor a mortal man that he would renege.
Would he promise and not perform? Ordain, and not fulfill it?
[20]*I was summoned* to bless, and bless [I must]; I cannot revoke it!
[21]He does not countenance any harm to Jacob; he brooks no wrong against Israel.
YHWH, his God, is at his side; the battle cry of the King is [heard] in his midst.
[22]El, who liberated him from Egypt, has horns like a wild ox.
[23]For there is no augury in Jacob, no divination in Israel.
Jacob is promptly informed; Israel—what El plans to do.
[24]Truly, he is a people who rises up like a lion; like a lion—he leaps up high.
He will not repose until he has prey to devour, until he drinks the blood of the slain.

[25]Then Balak said to Balaam: "Neither pronounce a malediction over him, nor pronounce a blessing over him."

[26]In response, Balaam said to Balak: "Did I not tell you explicitly that whatever YHWH commands I must do?"

[27]Then Balak said to Balaam: "Come, then, let me take you to another site. Perhaps it will be regarded as proper in God's sight that you maledict him for me from there."

[28]So, Balak took Balaam to the summit of Peor that overlooks the wasteland.

[29]Then Balaam said to Balak: "Build for me here seven altars, and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams."

[30]Balak did as Balaam instructed, and offered up a bull and a ram on each altar.

24 [1]Now, Balaam saw that it pleased YHWH to bless Israel, so he did not, as he had done each previous time, walk about in search of omens. Rather, he set his face toward the desert.

[2]Balaam raised his eyes and saw Israel encamped by its tribes, and the spirit of God was upon him.

[3]In a raised voice he recited his balanced verse, speaking:

נְאֻם בִּלְעָם בְּנוֹ בְעֹר, וּנְאֻם הַגֶּבֶר שְׁתֻם הָעָיִן,
נְאֻם שֹׁמֵעַ אִמְרֵי־אֵל [וְיֹדֵעַ דַּעַת עֶלְיוֹן.]
אֲשֶׁר מַחֲזֵה שַׁדַּי יֶחֱזֶה נֹפֵל וּגְלוּי עֵינָיִם.
מַה־טֹּבוּ אֹהָלֶיךָ יַעֲקֹב, מִשְׁכְּנֹתֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל.
כִּנְחָלִים נִטָּיוּ. כְּגַנֹּת עֲלֵי נָהָר.
כַּאֲהָלִים נָטַע יהוה, כַּאֲרָזִים עֲלֵי־מָיִם.
יִזַּל־מַיִם מִדָּלְיָו, וְזַרְעוֹ בְּמַיִם רַבִּים.
וְיָרֹם מֵאֲגַג מַלְכּוֹ, וְתִנַּשֵּׂא מַלְכֻתוֹ.
אֵל מוֹצִיאוֹ מִמִּצְרַיִם כְּתוֹעֲפֹת רְאֵם לוֹ.
יֹאכַל גּוֹיִם צָרָיו, וְחִצָּיו יִמְחָץ.
כָּרַע שָׁכַב כַּאֲרִי, וּכְלָבִיא מִי יְקִימֶנּוּ:
מְבָרֲכֶיךָ בָרוּךְ, וְאֹרְרֶיךָ אָרוּר.

The speech of Balaam, Beor's own son; [4]speech of the man whose eye is opened.
The speech of one who hears El's utterances, <who is privy to Elyon's knowledge>;
Who beholds the vision of Shadday, falling [asleep], or with uncovered eyes.
[5]How lovely are your tents, oh Jacob, your dwellings, oh Israel!
[6]They stand high like palm groves, like gardens beside the river;
Like aloes planted by YHWH, like cedars near the water.
[7]Water drips from his boughs; his seed grows near plentiful water.
His king shall prevail over Agag; his kingship shall be exalted!
[8]El, who brought him out of Egypt, has horns like a wild ox.
He destroys nations who oppose him; he crushes their bones,
And smashes his *loins*.
[9]He crouches on his haunches like a lion, and like a lion—who can rouse him?
Your blessers shall be blessed, but your cursers—accursed!

[10]Balak's anger flared at Balaam, and he struck his palms together. Balak said to Balaam: "I invited you to condemn my enemies, but you have most surely pronounced blessings these three times!

[11]"Now then: Away with you to your place! I had surely intended to reward you, but behold—YHWH has deprived you of reward."

[12]Then Balaam said to Balak:" Even to your messengers whom you sent to me I spoke as follows:

[13]'If Balak should give me all the silver and gold his house contains I would not be able to countermand YHWH's order, to do anything at all by my own desire. What YHWH speaks, that [very word] I must speak!'

[14]"Now then: Behold, I am returning to my people. Let me inform you what this people will do to your people in the days to come."

[15]In a raised voice he recited his balanced verse, speaking:

נְאֻם בִּלְעָם בְּנוֹ בְעֹר, וּנְאֻם הַגֶּבֶר שְׁתֻם הָעָיִן.
נְאֻם שֹׁמֵעַ אִמְרֵי־אֵל וְיֹדֵעַ דַּעַת עֶלְיוֹן.
מַחֲזֵה שַׁדַּי יֶחֱזֶה, נֹפֵל וּגְלוּי עֵינָיִם.
אֶרְאֶנּוּ וְלֹא עַתָּה, אֲשׁוּרֶנּוּ וְלֹא קָרוֹב.
דָּרַךְ כּוֹכָב מִיַּעֲקֹב, וְקָם שֵׁבֶט מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל.
וּמָחַץ פַּאֲתֵי מוֹאָב, וְקָדְקֹד כָּל־בְּנֵי־שֵׁת.
וְהָיָה אֱדוֹם יְרֵשָׁה, וְהָיָה יְרֵשָׁה שֵׂעִיר,
וְיִשְׂרָאֵל עֹשֶׂה חָיִל.
וְיֵרְדְּ מִיַּעֲקֹב, וְהֶאֱבִיד שָׂרִיד מֵעִיר.

The speech of Balaam, Beor's own son; the speech of the man whose
eye is opened;
[16]The speech of one who hears El's utterances, who is privy to Elyon's
knowledge;
He beholds the vision of Shadday, falling [into sleep], or with
uncovered eyes.
[17]I see it, but not now; I envision it, but not soon.
A "star" marches forth from Jacob; a meteor rises from Israel.
He strikes the brow of Moab, the *pate* of all the people of Seth.
[18]Edom shall be a land depopulated; Seir—depopulated by its enemies.
But Israel shall emerge triumphant!
[19]Jacob shall subdue *them,* and deport survivors from *Ar.*

[20]He beheld Amalek. In a raised voice he recited his balanced verse, speaking:

The "first" among nations was Amalek, but at his last—he is gone
forever!

[21]He beheld the Kenites. In a raised voice he recited his balanced verse, speaking:

Your settlement is secure; your nest—ensconced in the rock.
[22]Yet Cain will be a trampled land at the time Assur takes you captive.

[23]In a raised voice he recited his balanced verse, speaking:

Alas! Who will survive from *the Northland,* [24]when ships [are sent] by
the Kittim?
They subjugate Assur, and subjugate ʿEber [Hannahar], but, he, too,
shall be lost forever!

[25]Then Balaam set out to return to his place, and Balak also went on his way.

25 [1]The Israelites were settled down at Shittim when the people began to pursue improper relations with the young women of Moab.

[2]These invited the people to the sacrificial feasts of their god(s). The people partook, while prostrating themselves before their god(s).

[3]The Israelites became attached to Baal Peor, whereupon YHWH became enraged at the Israelites.

[4]Then YHWH said to Moses: Seize all of the leaders of the people and impale them to YHWH, facing the sun, so that the wrath of YHWH may be turned back from the Israelites.

[5]Thereupon Moses ordered the Israelite commanders: "Each of you is to kill those of his people who have become attached to Baal Peor."

[6]Just then, one man from among the Israelites arrived, and presented the Midianite woman to his kinsmen in view of Moses and in view of the entire community of Israel, as they were wailing at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.

[7]Now, Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, observed this. He arose from the midst of the community, holding a spear in his hand.

[8]He followed the Israelite man to the *qubbah*-tent, and stabbed them both, the Israelite man and the woman, at her *qubbah*-tent. The plague was then contained [and prevented] from attacking the Israelites.

[9]The dead in the plague numbered four and twenty thousand.

[10]Then YHWH spoke to Moses:

[11]Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has held back my wrath from against the Israelite people by zealously enacting my zeal in their midst, so that I did not annihilate the Israelite people in my [wrathful] zeal.

[12]Say, therefore: I hereby grant to him my covenant of fellowship.

[13]To him and his descendants after him this shall endure as a covenant of everlasting priesthood. It is in return for his having acted zealously on behalf of his God, through which he secured expiation for the Israelite people.

[14]The name of the slain Israelite man, who was slain together with the Midianite woman, is Zimri the son of Salu, [who was] a chieftain of a patriarchal "house" of the Simeonites.

[15]The name of the slain Midianite woman is Kozbi, the daughter of Zur, who was, in turn, head of the leagues of patriarchal "houses" among the Midianites.

[16]Then YHWH commanded Moses as follows:

[17]Attack the Midianites and you shall slay them!

[18]For they committed aggression against you by their deceptions, which they perpetrated against you in the incident of Peor; and in the incident of Kozbi, the daughter of the Midianite chieftain, their kinswoman, who was slain at the time of the plague *in the incident of Peor.*

26 [1b]Then YHWH said to Moses and to Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, as follows:

[2]Take a head count of the entire Israelite community, from twenty years of age and above, by their patriarchal "houses," everyone who is eligible for military service among the Israelites.

[3]Then Moses and Eleazar, the priest, issued those (instructions) in the Plains of Moab, at the Jordan near Jericho, as follows:

[4]"Those twenty years of age and above, as YHWH commanded Moses."

The descendants of the Israelites who came out of the land of Egypt were:

[5]Reuben, the firstborn of Israel. Descendants of Reuben: [Affiliated with] Enoch—the Enochite clan. Affiliated with Pallu—the Palluite clan.

[6]Affiliated with Hezron—the Hezronite clan. Affiliated with Carmi—the Carmite clan.

[7]These are the Reubenite clans. Their musters numbered 43,730.

[8]Descendants of Pallu: Eliab.

[9]Descendants of Eliab: Nemuel and Dathan and Abiram (the same Dathan and Abiram, the elect of the community, who agitated against Moses and against Aaron in league with the faction of Korah, when those agitated against YHWH).

[10](Then the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, together with Korah, as that faction perished; when fire consumed the two-hundred fifty men. They became a symbol.)

[11](The sons of Korah did not die, however.)

[12]Descendants of Simeon, by their clans: Affiliated with Nemuel—the Nemuelite clan. Affiliated with Yamin—the Yaminite clan. Affiliated with Yachin—the Yachinite clan.

[13]Affiliated with Zerah—the Zerahite clan. Affiliated with Saul—the Saulite clan.

[14]These are the Simeonite clans—22,200.

[15]Descendants of Gad, by their clans: Affiliated with Zephon, the Zephonite clan. Affiliated with Haggi—the Haggite clan. Affiliated with Shuni—the Shunite clan.

[16]Affiliated with Ozni—the Oznite clan. Affiliated with Er—the Erite clan.

[17]Affiliated with Arod—the Arodite clan. Affiliated with Areli—the Arelite clan.

[18]These are the Gadite clans by their musters, numbering 40,500.

[19]Descendants of Judah: Er and Onan. (Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan.)

[20]Remaining descendants of Judah by their clans: Affiliated with Shelah—the Shelanite clan. Affiliated with Perez—the Perezite clan. Affiliated with Zerah—the Zerahite clan.

[21]Descendants of Perez: Affiliated with Hezron—the Hezronite clan. Affiliated with Hamul—the Hamulite clan.

[22]These are the Judahite clans by their musters, numbering 76,500.

[23]Descendants of Issachar by their clans: Affiliated with Tola—the Tolaite clan. Affiliated with Puvah—the Punite clan.

[24]Affiliated with Yashub—the Yashubite clan. Affiliated with Shimron—the Shimronite clan.

[25]These are the Issacharite clans. Their musters: 64,300.

[26]Descendants of Zebulun, by their clans: Affiliated with Sered—the Seredite clan. Affiliated with Elon—the Elonite clan. Affiliated with Jahleel—the Jahleelite clan.

[27]These are the Zebulunite clans by their musters, numbering 60,500.

[28]Descendants of Joseph, by their clans: Manasseh and Ephraim.

[29]Descendants of Manasseh: Affiliated with Machir—the Machirite clan. Machir begat Gilead. Affiliated with Gilead—the Gileadite clans.

[30]These are the descendants of Gilead: Affiliated with Abiezer—the Abiezerite clan. Affiliated with Helek—the Helekite clan.

[31]Affiliated with Asriel—the Asrielite clan. Affiliated with Shechem—the Shechemite clan.

[32]Affiliated with Shemida—the Shemidaite clan. Affiliated with Hepher—the Hepherite clan.

[33](But Zelophehad, son of Hepher, had no sons, but only daughters. The names of Zelophehad's daughters were: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah.)

[34]These are the clans of Manasseh. Their musters numbered 52,700.

[35]These are the descendants of Ephraim by their clans: Affiliated with Shuthelah—the Shuthelahite clan. Affiliated with Becher—the Becherite clan. Affiliated with Tahan—the Tahanite clan.

[36]These are the descendants of Shuthelah: Affiliated with Eran—the Eranite clan.

[37]These are the Ephraimite clans by their muster, numbering 32,500. These are the descendants of Joseph by their clans.

[38]Descendants of Benjamin by their clans: Affiliated with Bela—the Belaite clan. Affiliated with Ashbel—the Ashbelite clan. Affiliated with Ahiram—the Ahiramite clan.

[39]Affiliated with Shephupham—the Shephuphamite clan. Affiliated with Hupham—the Huphamite clan.

[40]The descendants of Bela were Ard and Naaman. Affiliated with Ard—the Ardite clan. Affiliated with Naaman—the Naamanite clan.

[41]These are the descendants of Benjamin by their clans. Their muster numbered 45,600.

[42]These are the descendants of Dan by their clans: Affiliated with Shuham—the Shuhamite clan. These are the clans of Dan.

[43]The muster of the Shuhamite clan numbered 64,400.

[44]Descendants of Asher by their clans: Affiliated with Imnah—the Imnahite clan. Affiliated with Ishvi—the Ishvite clan. Affiliated with Beriah—the Beriite clan.

[45]Affiliated with the descendants of Beriah: Affiliated with Heber—the Heberite clan. Affiliated with Malchiel—the Malchielite clan.

[46]The name of Asher's daughter was Serah.

[47]These are the clans of the descendants of Asher by their muster, numbering 53,400.

[48]Descendants of Naphtali by their clans: Affiliated with Jahzeel—the Jahzeelite clan. Affiliated with Guni—the Gunite clan.

[49]Affiliated with Jezer—the Jezerite clan. Affiliated with Shillem—the Shillemite clan.

[50]These are the clans of the Naphtalites, clan by clan. Their muster numbered 45,400.

[51]These are musters of the Israelite people, numbering 601,730.

[52]Then YHWH spoke to Moses as follows:

[53]To the above shall the land be allotted as territories, in proportion to the number of names.

[54]To the more numerous shall you increase his territory, and to the less numerous—decrease his territory. Each shall be granted his territory in accordance with his musters.

[55]Moreover, it is by lot that the land shall be apportioned. All shall receive territories registered to the names of their patriarchal tribes.

[56]By order of the lot shall everyone's territory be apportioned, whether more numerous or less numerous.

[57]These are the musters of the Levitical tribe by their clans: Affiliated with

Gershon—the Gershonite clan. Affiliated with Kohath—the Kohathite clan. Affiliated with Merari—the Merarite clan.

[58]These are the clans of Levi. The Libnite clan, the Hebronite clan, the Mahlite, the Mushite clan, the Korahite clan. Kohath was the father of Amram.

[59]The name of Amram's wife was Jochebed, daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt. She bore to Amram Aaron, Moses, and Miriam, their sister.

[60]There were born to Aaron: Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar.

[61]Nadab and Abihu died as they were presenting a despised incense offering in the presence of YHWH.

[62]Their muster numbered 23,000, including all males one month of age and above. For they had not been mustered together with the Israelite people, for no territory had been granted to them among the Israelite people.

[63]These are the musters taken by Moses and Eleazar, the priest, who took a census of the Israelite people in the Plains of Moab, across the river from Jericho.

[64]Among these there was no person remaining from the musters taken by Moses and Aaron, the priest, who took a census of the Israelite people in the wilderness of Sinai.

[65]For YHWH had said of them that they would surely die in the wilderness, and (indeed), not a single person of them survived, except for Caleb, son of Jephunneh and Joshua, son of Nun.

27 [1]The daughters of Zelophehad, son of Hepher, son of Gilead, son of Machir, son of Manasseh, of the clans of Manasseh, son of Joseph, came forward. These are the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, and Hoglah, and Milcah and Tirzah.

[2]They stood before Moses and before Eleazar, the priest, and before the tribal chieftains and the entire community at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, [speaking] as follows:

[3]"Our father died in the wilderness and he was not one of the group that had banded together against YHWH, one of Korah's faction, for he died on account of his own sin. He had no sons.

[4]"Why should our father's name be deleted from within his clan because he had no son? Grant us a land holding among our father's brothers."

[5]Then Moses presented their case before YHWH.

[6]YHWH instructed Moses as follows:

[7]The daughters of Zelophehad speak in truth. By all means, grant them an ancestral landholding among their father's brothers, and transfer their father's ancestral territory to them.

[8]And to the Israelite people speak as follows: If a man should die without having a son, you are to transfer his ancestral territory to his daughter.

[9]Should he have no daughter, you are to grant his ancestral territory to his brothers.

[10]If he, himself, had no brothers, you are to grant his ancestral territory to his father's brothers.

[11]If his father had no brothers, you are to grant his ancestral territory to his consanguineous relative, of his clan, so that he may possess it. This shall be a statute of jurisprudence, as YHWH commanded Moses.

[12]Then YHWH said to Moses: Ascend this mountain, Abarim, and view the land that I have granted to the Israelite people.

[13]Once you have seen it you will be gathered to your kinsmen; you, too, just as Aaron, your brother, was gathered.

[14]For you disobeyed me in the wilderness of Zin during the insurrection of the community, failing to affirm my sanctity in their sight by means of the water. Those were the waters of Meribath-Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin.

[15]Moses then spoke to YHWH as follows:

[16]"May YHWH, divine ruler of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a person over the community,

[17]"One who will go forth ahead of the community and return at their head; who will lead them forth and bring them back, so that YHWH's community may not be as flocks that have no shepherd!"

[18]Then YHWH instructed Moses: Summon unto you Joshua, son of Nun, a person possessed of spirit, and lay your hand on him.

[19]Station him before Eleazar, the priest, and before the entire community, and authorize him in their sight.

[20]Confer some of your majesty upon him, so that the entire community of Israel will be obedient [to him].

[21]Before Eleazar, the priest, he shall stand, who shall make oracular inquiry on his behalf on the ruling of the Urim, in the presence of YHWH. By his command they shall go out to battle and by his command they shall return home, he and the entire community of Israel.

[22]Moses did as YHWH commanded him. He summoned Joshua, and stationed him before Eleazar, the priest, and before the entire community.

[23]He laid his hands on him, and charged him, just as YHWH commanded through Moses.

28 [1]YHWH spoke to Moses as follows:

[2]Issue a command to the Israelite people, and say to them: You must take care to present to me my offering, my food, for my aromatic offerings by fire, at its set time.

[3]Say to them: This is the offering by fire that you shall present to YHWH: Yearling lambs without blemish, two each day, as a regular burnt offering.

[4]Perform the one lamb in the morning and the second lamb you shall perform at twilight.

[5]And for a grain offering: one-tenth of an *ephah* of semolina flour, mixed with one-fourth of a *hin* of beaten oil.

[6][This is] the regular burnt offering, the one that was instituted at Mount Sinai, to produce a pleasing aroma; it is an offering by fire to YHWH.

[7]And its libation: one-fourth of a *hin* for each lamb, to be poured out in the Sanctuary as a libation of intoxicating drink to YHWH.

[8]You shall perform the second lamb at twilight. You shall perform [it] with the same grain offering as in the morning, and with the same libation. It is an offering by fire of pleasing aroma to YHWH.

[9]And on the Sabbath Day: two yearling lambs without blemish, and two-tenths of an *ephah* of semolina flour as a grain offering, mixed with oil, together with its libation.

[10]This is to be the burnt offering on every successive Sabbath, in addition to the burnt offering of the regular ritual and its libation.

[11]And on your New Moons you shall present a burnt offering to YHWH. Bulls from the herd—two, and one ram; yearling lambs—seven, without blemish.

[12]And three-tenths of an *ephah* of semolina flour, as a grain offering mixed with oil for each bull, and two-tenths of an *ephah* of semolina flour as a grain offering mixed with oil for the one ram.

[13]And one-tenth of an *ephah* each, of semolina flour as a grain offering mixed with oil for every lamb. It is a burnt offering of pleasing aroma, an offering by fire to YHWH.

[14]And their libations: There shall be one-half of a *hin* for each bull and one-third *hin* for the ram, and one-fourth of a *hin* for each lamb—of wine. This is to be the burnt offering for each successive New Moon, for the months of the year.

[15]And one he-goat shall be performed as a sin-offering to YHWH, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its libation.

[16]In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, a paschal sacrifice to YHWH.

[17]And on the fifteenth day of the same month a pilgrimage festival; for seven days unleavened bread shall be eaten.

[18]On the first day [there is to be] a sanctuary convocation; you may not perform any manner of assigned labor.

[19]You shall present an offering by fire to YHWH: bulls of the herd—two; one ram, and seven yearling lambs, without blemish you shall provide.

[20]And their libation: three-tenths [of an *ephah*] for the ram you shall perform.

[21]You shall perform one-tenth [of an *ephah*] for each lamb, for all seven lambs.

[22]And one he-goat for a sin offering, for performing expiation rites over you.

[23]Apart from the burnt offering of the morning, that is part of the regular burnt offering, you shall perform these.

[24]You shall perform the very same [rites] each day for seven days as a gift of food, an offering by fire to produce a pleasing aroma for YWWH. This [rite] shall be performed along with its libation, in addition to the regular burnt offering.

[25]And on the seventh day—a sanctuary convocation; you may not perform any manner of assigned labor.

[26]And on the day of the offering of first fruits, when you present a grain offering of the new crop to YHWH, on your festival of weeks, you shall hold a sanctuary convocation. You may not perform any manner of assigned labor.

[27]You shall present a burnt offering to produce a pleasing aroma for YHWH: bulls of the herd—two; one ram; seven yearling lambs.

[28]And their grain offerings: semolina flour mixed with oil; three-tenths [of an *ephah*] for each bull, two-tenths [of an *ephah*] for the ram.

[29]One-tenth [of an *ephah*] apiece for each lamb, for the seven lambs.

[30]One he-goat [for the sin-offering], for performing expiation rites over you.

[31]Apart from the burnt offering of the regular ritual and its grain offering you shall perform [these]; they shall consist for you of unblemished animals, and [shall be accompanied by] their libations.

29 [1]And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall hold a sanctuary convocation; you may not perform any manner of assigned labor. It shall be a day of blaring [the horn] for you.

[2]You shall perform a burnt offering, to produce a pleasing aroma for YHWH: one bull of the herd, one ram, yearling lambs—seven, without blemish.

[3]And their grain offering: semolina flour mixed with oil, three-tenths [of an *ephah*] for the bull, two-tenths [of an *ephah*] for the ram.

[4]And one-tenth of an *ephah* for each lamb, for the seven lambs.

[5]And one he-goat for the sin-offering, for performing expiation rites over you.

[6]Apart from the burnt offering of the New Moon and its grain offering, and the regular burnt offering and its grain offering, and their libations according to their rule, to produce a pleasant aroma, an offering by fire to YHWH.

[7]And on the tenth of the same, seventh month you shall hold a sanctuary

convocation, when you must practice self-affliction. You may not perform any manner of assigned labor.

[8]You shall present a burnt offering to YHWH, to produce a pleasing aroma: one bull of the herd, one ram; yearling lambs—seven, without blemish, shall your provide.

[9]And their grain offering: semolina flour mixed with oil; three-tenths [of an *ephah*] for the bull, two-tenths [of an *ephah*] for the one ram.

[10]One-tenth [of an *ephah*] apiece for each lamb, for the seven lambs.

[11]One he-goat for the sin-offering, apart from the sin-offering of the expiation rites and the regular burnt offering and its grain offering, and their libations.

[12]And on the fifteenth day of the seventh month you shall hold a sanctuary convocation; you may not perform any manner of assigned labor. You shall celebrate a pilgrimage festival for YHWH for seven days.

[13]You shall present a burnt offering, as an offering by fire to produce a pleasing aroma for YHWH: bulls of the herd—thirteen; rams—two; yearling lambs—fourteen; they shall be without blemish.

[14]And their grain offering: semolina flour mixed with oil, three-tenths [*ephah*] for each bull, for the thirteen bulls; two-tenths [*ephah*] for each ram, for both rams.

[15]And one-tenth [of an *ephah*] apiece for each lamb, for the fourteen lambs.

[16]And a he-goat for the sin offering, apart from the regular burnt offering, its grain offering and its libation.

[17]And on the second day: bulls of the herd—twelve; rams—two; yearling lambs—fourteen, without blemish.

[18]And their grain offering and their libations, for the bulls, for the rams and for the lambs in proportion to their number, according to the rule.

[19]And one he-goat for the sin-offering, apart from the regular burnt offering and its grain offering, and their libations.

[20]And on the third day: bulls—eleven; rams—two; yearling lambs—fourteen, without blemish.

[21]And their grain offering and their libations, for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, in proportion to their number, according to the rule.

[22]And one he-goat for the sin offering, apart from the regular burnt offering and its grain offering, and its libation.

[23]And on the fourth day: bulls—ten; rams—two; yearling lambs—fourteen, without blemish.

[24]Their grain offering and their libations, for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, in proportion to their number according to the rule.

[25]And one he-goat for the sin offering, apart from the regular burnt offering and its libation.

[26]And on the fifth day; bulls—nine; rams—two; yearling lambs—fourteen, without blemish.

[27]And their grain offering and their libations, for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, in proportion to their number, according to the rule.

[28]And one he-goat for the sin-offering, apart from the regular burnt offering and its grain offering and its libation.

[29]And on the sixth day: bulls—eight; rams—two; yearling lambs—fourteen, without blemish.

[30]And their grain offering and their libations, for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, in proportion to their number according to the rule.

[31]And one he-goat for the sin-offering, apart from the regular burnt offering, its grain offering and its libation.

[32]And on the seventh day: bulls—seven; rams—two; yearling lambs—fourteen, without blemish.

[33]And their grain offering and their libations, for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, in proportion to their number according to the rule.

[34]And one he-goat for the sin-offering, apart from the regular burnt offering, its grain offering and its libation.

[35]On the eighth day you shall hold a sacred gathering; you may not perform any manner of assigned labor.

[36]You shall present a burnt offering, an offering by fire, to produce a pleasing aroma for YHWH: one bull, one ram; yearling lambs—seven, without blemish.

[37]Their grain offerings and their libations, for the bull, for the ram, and for the lambs, in proportion to their number according to the rule.

[38]And one he-goat for the sin-offering, apart from the regular burnt offering, and its grain offering and its libation.

[39]These you shall perform for YHWH on your set festivals—apart from your votive offerings and your voluntary offerings—to serve as your burnt offerings, your grain offerings, your libations, and as your sacred gifts of greeting.

30 [1]Moses spoke to the Israelite people in accordance with all that YHWH had commanded Moses.

[2]Moses addressed the tribal heads of the Israelite people as follows: "This is the dictum that YHWH has commanded:

[3]"If a man pronounces a vow to YHWH, or takes an oath to obligate himself by a binding agreement, he may not profane his pledged word. According to all that issues forth from his mouth, so shall he perform.

[4]"If a woman pronounces a vow to YHWH, or obligates herself by a binding agreement while still in her father's house during her youth,

[5]"and her father heard her vow, or the binding agreement by which she obligated herself, but her father kept silent with respect to her, all her vows

shall remain in force, and any binding agreement by which she had obligated herself shall remain in force, as well.

[6]"But if her father disavowed her at the time of his hearing, none of her vows, or her binding agreements by which she had obligated herself shall remain in force. YHWH will pardon her, because her father has disavowed her.

[7]"Should she be married to a man at a time when her vows were incumbent upon her, or any verbal statement by which she may have obligated herself,

[8]"and her husband kept silent with respect to her at the time of his hearing, her vows shall remain in force, and her binding agreements by which she had obligated herself shall remain in force, as well.

[9]"But if her husband disavowed her at the time of his hearing, he may annul her vow that was binding upon her, and any verbal statement by which she had obligated herself. YHWH will pardon her.

[10]"As for the vow of a widow or divorcee, whatever binding agreements she had assumed upon herself shall remain in force.

[11]"But if she had pronounced the vow while still in her husband's domicile, or had [at that time] assumed a binding agreement upon herself, under oath,

[12]"and if her husband heard, but kept silent with regard to her, and did not disavow her, all her vows shall remain in force, and every binding agreement by which she had obligated herself shall remain in force, as well.

[13]"But if her husband had, indeed, annulled them at the time of his hearing, whatever issued forth from her lips regarding her vows or the binding agreements by which she obligated herself shall not remain in force.

[14]"As regards any vow, or any oath to assume a binding agreement to practice self-affliction, it is her husband who must reaffirm it, and it is her husband who must annul it.

[15]"If her husband keeps silent with regard to her, as the days pass, he has [in effect] reaffirmed all her vows, and all her binding agreements by which she is obligated. He has reaffirmed them by virtue of keeping silent at the time of his hearing.

[16]"But, should he purposely annul them only subsequent to his having heard [them], it is he who shall bear the penalty of her offense."

[17]These are the statutes that YHWH commanded Moses, concerning relations between a man and his wife, and between a father and his daughter during her youth, while in her father's house.

31 [1]YHWH spoke to Moses as follows:

[2]Exact the vengeance of the Israelites from the Midianites, and then you will be gathered to your kinsfolk.

[3]Thereupon Moses spoke to the people as follows: "Deploy from your

midst men for military service, and let them move against the Midianites to inflict YHWH's vengeance against the Midianites.

[4]"A thousand from each tribe; a thousand from each tribe, from all the tribes of Israel, shall you dispatch to military service."

[5][Accordingly], there were mustered from the clans of Israel a thousand from each tribe; twelve thousand men, girded for military service.

[6]Then Moses dispatched them to military service, a thousand from each tribe; they, together with Phinehas, son of Eleazar, the priest, to military service, bearing the sacred vessels and the trumpets for sounding.

[7]They waged a military campaign against the Midianites, as YHWH had commanded Moses, and slew all of the males.

[8]And as well, they slew the kings of Midian together with their slain men, 'Evi, Rekem, Tsur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian; and Balaam, son of Beor, they also slew with the sword.

[9]The Israelites captured the wives of the Midianites and their young children, and all of their beasts and all of their livestock, and plundered all of their wealth.

[10]And all of their towns in their areas of settlement, and all of their enclosures they set afire.

[11]They seized all the spoils and all the take in both of humans and animals.

[12]They brought to Moses and to Eleazar, the priest, and to the entire Israelite community the captives and the take in spoils, to the encampment in the Plains of Moab, which is located at the Jordan near Jericho.

[13]Moses and Eleazar, the priest, and all of the chieftains of the community went to meet them outside the encampment.

[14]Then Moses became enraged at the commanders of the military forces, the officers of thousands and the officers of hundreds, those returning from the military campaign.

[15]Moses said to them: "Have you spared the lives of any of the females?

[16]"They are the very ones who were detrimental to the Israelites in the Balaam affair, by instigating sacrilegious rebellion against YHWH in the Peor incident, so that a plague struck the community of YHWH.

[17]"Now, then, kill off every male among the young children, and kill off, as well, every woman who has known a man through lying down with a male.

[18]"But you may spare for yourselves all the young children among the females, [and those] who have not known lying down with a male.

[19]"As for you, you must then remain outside the encampment for seven days. And as for anyone who has taken a human life, or anyone who [otherwise] had contact with a corpse—you must purify yourselves on the third day and on the seventh day, you and your captives.

[20]"Furthermore, you must purify yourselves [with respect to] any clothing, or leather garment, or anything made of goatskin, or any wooden vessels."

[21]Then Eleazar, the priest, said to the fighting men who had come to do battle: "This is the statute of the prescribed instruction that YHWH commanded Moses:

[22]" 'Gold and silver, copper and iron, tin and lead—

[23]" 'any material that can endure fire, you must plunge into fire so that it may be purified; and moreover, it must undergo purification by means of the water of lustration. But, any material that cannot withstand fire, you must immerse in water.

[24]" 'You must launder your clothing on the seventh day and thereby become pure. Only afterward may you reenter the encampment.' "

[25]YHWH instructed Moses as follows:

[26]Make a head count of the take of captives, both of humans and beasts; you, together with Eleazar, the priest, and the heads of the patriarchal [houses] of the community.

[27]You shall split the take in half between those who bore arms in the war, who went to war as part of the military force, and between the rest of the community.

[28]You shall raise an impost for YHWH from the fighting men, who went to war as part of the military force, consisting of one body from five hundred, [to be raised] from humans, and from cattle, and from mules, and from flocks.

[29]You shall take [this] from their half share and deliver it to Eleazar, the priest, as a contribution to YHWH.

[30]And from the half share assigned to the Israelite people you shall appropriate one unit out of fifty, from humans, and from cattle, and from mules, and from flocks, of all species of animals, which you shall then deliver to the Levites, who are charged with the maintenance of YHWH's Tabernacle.

[31]Moses and Eleazar, the priest, did as YHWH had commanded Moses.

[32]The take, in excess of the spoils plundered [individually] by the men of the fighting force, amounted to: Flocks—675,000;

[33]Cattle: 72,000.

[34]Mules: 61,000.

[35]Humans: From the women who had never experienced lying with a male: Total of humans: 32,000.

[36]The half, consisting of the share of those who were part of the fighting force, amounted to: Flocks in the number of 337,500.

[37]The impost to YHWH from flocks amounted to six hundred seventy-five.

[38]And of cattle: 36,000, and their impost to YHWH: seventy-two.

[39]And of mules: 30,500, and their impost to YHWH: sixty-one.

[40]And humans: 16,000, and their impost to YHWH: thirty-two persons.

[41]Moses delivered the impost [comprising] the contribution to YHWH, to Eleazar, the priest, as YHWH had commanded Moses.

[42]And from the half share of the Israelite people, which Moses had split off from the fighting men—

[43]the half share of the community from the flocks: 337,500.

[44]And cattle: 36,000.

[45]And mules: 30,500.

[46]And humans: 16,000.

[47]Moses took from the half share of the Israelite people one unit out of fifty, from humans and from beasts, which he delivered to the Levites, charged with the maintenance of YHWH's Tabernacle, as YHWH commanded Moses.

[48]The commanders in charge of the thousand-man fighting units, the officers of thousands and the officers of hundreds, then approached Moses.

[49]They said to Moses: "Your servants have mustered the fighting men under our command and no one is missing.

[50]"We are presenting as the offering for YHWH what each man found, [the following] articles of gold: armlets, bracelets, signet rings, earrings, and pendants to serve as ransom for our lives, in the presence of YHWH."

[51]Moses and Eleazar, the priest, accepted the gold from them, all kinds of wrought articles.

[52]The sum of gold from the contribution which they raised for YHWH was 16,750 shekels, from the officers of thousands and the officers of hundreds.

[53]The fighting men plundered spoils, every man for himself.

[54]Moses and Eleazar, the priest, accepted the gold from the officers of thousands and the officers of hundreds and had it brought to the Tent of Meeting, as a reminder of the Israelite people in the presence of YHWH.

32 [1]Extensive livestock belonged to the Reubenites and Gadites, in very great numbers. They surveyed the region of Jazer and the region of Gilead, and behold, the area was good for livestock.

[2]The Gadites and Reubenites arrived to address Moses and Eleazar, the priest, and the chieftains of the community as follows:

[3]"Ataroth, and Dibon, and Jazer, and Nimrah, and Heshbon and Elealeh, and Sebam and Nebo and Beon—

[4]"the land that YHWH struck down before the community of Israel is a land good for livestock, and your servants have livestock."

[5]They went on to say: "If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants as an acquired estate; do not make us cross the Jordan."

[6]But Moses said to the Gadites and Reubenites: "Shall your kinsmen come to do battle while you remain settled here?

[7]"Why would you turn the will of the Israelites against crossing over into the land which YHWH has granted them?

[8]"This is what your ancestors did when I dispatched them from Kadesh Barnea to survey the land.

[9]"They went up to Wadi Eshcol and surveyed the land, and proceeded to turn the will of the Israelites against entering the land which YHWH had granted them.

[10]"YHWH became enraged at that time, and he took an oath as follows:

[11]"Let not the men who came up out of Egypt, from twenty years of age and above, ever see the land that I promised to Abraham and to Isaac and to Jacob, for they did not remain committed to me.

[12]"Except for Caleb, son of Jephunneh, the Kenizzite, and Joshua, son of Nun, for they remained committed to YHWH.

[13]"Then YHWH became enraged at Israel, and he tossed them about in the wilderness for forty years until the entire generation that had done what was evil in the sight of YHWH came to an end.

[14]"And now you have arisen in place of your ancestors, a breed of sinful men, to add yet more to YHWH's wrath toward Israel.

[15]"Were you to go back on your commitment to him, he would continue to abandon him in the wilderness, and you will have destroyed this entire people."

[16]They then approached him saying: "We will build sheepfolds here for our livestock, and towns for our young children.

[17]"As for us, we will swiftly deploy as an armed force in advance of the Israelite people until we have brought them to their territory, while our young children remain settled in the fortified towns, [protected] from the inhabitants of the land.

[18]"We will not return to our homes until the Israelites, to a man, shall have each taken possession of his estate.

[19]"For we will not receive our estate together with them, across the Jordan and beyond, for we will have [already] received our estate on the eastern side of the Jordan."

[20]Then Moses said to them: "If you will do this thing; if you will deploy as an armed force in advance of YHWH to do battle,

[21]"and every armed man of yours will cross the Jordan in advance of YHWH until he drives out his enemies from his presence,

[22]"with the result that the land is subdued before YHWH—thereafter you may return and be free of obligation to YHWH and Israel, and this land shall be for you an acquired estate in the presence of YHWH.

[23]"But if you do not act accordingly, you will have offended against YHWH, and know—it is your very own offense that will overtake you!

[24]"Build for yourselves towns for your young children and sheepfolds for your flocks, and that which departs from your mouth—fulfill!"

[25]Then the Gadites and Reubenites addressed Moses as follows: "Your servants shall do what my lord commands.

[26]"Our young children, our wives, our livestock and all of our cattle shall remain there in the towns of Gilead.

[27]"And your servants shall cross over, every armed combatant to do battle in advance of YHWH, just as my lord instructs."

[28]Then Moses gave instructions to them, joined by Eleazar, the priest, and Joshua, son of Nun, and the heads of the patriarchal tribes of the Israelites.

[29]Moses said to them: "If the Gadites and Reubenites [indeed] cross the Jordan together with you, every armed man, to do battle in advance of YHWH, with the result that the land is subdued before you, you shall grant to them the land of Gilead as an acquired estate.

[30]"But if they do not cross over as armed men together with you, let them acquire their estate in your midst, in the land of Canaan."

[31]Then the Gadites and Reubenites replied as follows: "That which YHWH has commanded your servants, so shall we do.

[32]"As for us, we shall cross over as armed men in advance of YHWH [into] the land of Canaan, our acquired received estate in Transjordan being in our possession."

[33]So Moses granted them, to the Gadites and the Reubenites, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, son of Joseph, the kingdom of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and of the kingdom of Og, king of the Bashan; the land inclusive of its towns, within the encompassing borders of the towns of the land.

[34]The Gadites rebuilt Dibon and Ataroth and Aroer,

[35]and Atroth-Shophan and Jazer and Jogbehah,

[36]and Beth-Nimrah and Beth-Haran, as fortified towns and sheepfolds.

[37]And the Reubenites rebuilt Heshbon and Elealeh and Kiriathaim

[38]and Nebo, and Baal-Meon—whose names were switched—and Sibmah. They gave names to the towns that they rebuilt.

[39]The sons of Machir, son of Manasseh, went to the Gilead and captured it, driving out the Amorites who inhabited it.

[40]Then Moses granted the Gilead to Machir, son of Manasseh, and he settled in it.

[41]And Jair, son of Manasseh, went and captured the farming villages of Ham, and renamed them the Farming Villages of Jair.

[42]Nobah went and captured Kenath, together with its daughter settlements, and renamed it Nobah, after himself.

33 [1]These are the routes of march of the Israelites who departed from the land of Egypt, according to their divisions, by order of Moses and Aaron.

[2]Moses wrote down their points of departure for their routes of march by order of YHWH. These, then, are their routes of march, according to their points of departure:

[3]They set forth from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of

the first month; on the morrow of the paschal sacrifice the Israelites departed from Egypt defiantly, in sight of all the Egyptians.

[4]The Egyptians were burying those among them whom YHWH had slain, every firstborn; YHWH also condemned their gods to punishment.

[5]The Israelites marched from Rameses and encamped at Succoth.

[6]They marched from Succoth and encamped at Etham, which is on the edge of the wilderness.

[7]They marched from Etham, but turned back toward Pi-Hahiroth, which faces Baal-Zephon, and they encamped before Migdol.

[8]They marched from Pi-Hahiroth and crossed over through the sea into the wilderness. They then proceeded on a journey of three days in the Wilderness of Etham, encamping at Marah.

[9]They marched from Marah and arrived at Elim, and in Elim there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they encamped there.

[10]They marched from Elim and encamped by the Sea of Reeds.

[11]They marched from the Sea of Reeds and encamped in the Wilderness of Sin.

[12]They marched from the Wilderness of Sin and encamped at Dophkah.

[13]They marched from Dophkah and encamped at Alush.

[14]They marched from Alush and encamped at Rephidim; but there was no water there for the people to drink.

[15]They marched from Rephidim and encamped in the Wilderness of Sinai.

[16]They marched from the Wilderness of Sinai and encamped at Kibroth-Hataava.

[17]They marched from Kibroth-Hataava and encamped at Hazeroth.

[18]They marched from Hazeroth and encamped at Rithmah.

[19]They marched from Rithmah and encamped at Rimmon-Perez.

[20]They marched from Rimmon-Perez and encamped at Libnah.

[21]They marched from Libnah and encamped at Rissah.

[22]They marched from Rissah and encamped at Kehelath.

[23]They marched from Kehelath and encamped at Mount Shepher.

[24]They marched from Mount Shepher and encamped at Haradah.

[25]They marched from Haradah and encamped at Makheloth.

[26]They marched from Makheloth and encamped at Tahath.

[27]They marched from Tahath and encamped at Terah.

[28]They marched from Terah and encamped at Mithkah.

[29]They marched from Mithkah and encamped at Hashmonah.

[30]They marched from Hashmonah and encamped at Moseroth.

[31]They marched from Moseroth and encamped at Bene-Jaakan.

[32]They marched from Bene-Jaakan and encamped at Hor-Hagidgad.

[33]They marched from Hor-Hagidgad and encamped at Jotbath.

[34]They marched from Jotbath and encamped at Abronah.

[35]They marched from Abronah and encamped at Ezion-Geber.

[36]They marched from Ezion-Geber and encamped in the Wilderness of Zin, that is Kadesh.

[37]They marched from Kadesh and encamped at Mount Hor, on the edge of the land of Edom.

[38]Aaron, the priest, ascended Mount Hor by order of YHWH and there he died in the fortieth year after the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, in the fifth month, on the first of the month.

[39]Aaron was one hundred twenty-three years old at his death on Mount Hor.

[40]The Canaanite, the king of Arad, who ruled in the Negeb, in the land of Canaan, heard of the arrival of the Israelites.

[41]They marched from Mount Hor and encamped at Zalmonah.

[42]They marched from Zalmonah and encamped at Punon.

[43]They marched from Punon and encamped at Oboth.

[44]They marched from Oboth and encamped at Iyye-Abarim, on the border of Moab.

[45]They marched from Iyyim and encamped at Dibon-Gad.

[46]They marched from Dibon-Gad and encamped at Almon-Diblathaim.

[47]They marched from Almon-Diblathaim and encamped in the hills of Abarim, before Nebo.

[48]They marched from the hills of Abarim and encamped in the Plains of Moab, across the Jordan from Jericho.

[49]They encamped by the Jordan, from Beth-Jeshimoth as far as Abel-Shittim in the Plains of Moab.

[50]Then YHWH spoke to Moses in the Plains of Moab across the Jordan from Jericho, as follows:

[51]Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: You are now crossing the Jordan into the Land of Canaan.

[52]You must drive out all of the inhabitants of the land from your presence; you shall ruin all of their figurative objects, and all of their molten images shall you ruin, and all of their cult platforms you must destroy.

[53]You shall depopulate the land and settle in it, for to you have I granted the land to seize as a possession.

[54]You shall allocate the land to yourselves as an estate by lot, by your clans; to the more numerous shall you grant a larger estate and to the less numerous shall you grant a smaller estate. Wherever the lot shall come out for anyone, it shall be his. You shall allocate the land to yourselves by your ancestral tribes.

[55]But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from your presence, it will happen that those of them whom you allow to remain will be as prickles in your eyes and as thorns in your sides, and they will attack you on the [very] land in which you dwell.

[56]Thus it will be, that as I had intended to do to them I will do to you!

34 [1]YHWH addressed Moses as follows:

[2]Issue a command to the Israelite people and say to them: You are now about to enter the Land of Canaan. This is the land that shall fall to you as an apportioned estate, the Land of Canaan according to its boundaries.

[3]Your southern limit shall be [charted] from the Wilderness of Zin, abutting Edom, thus placing the eastern point of your southern border at the edge of the Dead Sea.

[4]Your boundary shall then go around, passing southward of the ascent of Akrabbim, and traversing through Zin; its concluding stretches shall pass southward of Kadesh Barnea, exiting at Hazar-Addar, and reaching Azmon.

[5]From Azmon, the border shall go around, toward the Wadi of Egypt, with its concluding stretches reaching the Sea.

[6]As for the western border: The Great Sea shall serve you as a border; this shall be your western border.

[7]Thus shall be your northern border: From the Great Sea you shall chart yourselves a line to Mount Hor.

[8]From Mount Hor, you chart a line to Lebo, of Hamath; the concluding stretches of the border shall reach Zedad.

[9]The border shall then stretch to Ziphron, with its concluding stretches reaching Hazar-Enan. This shall be your northern border.

[10]You shall chart for yourselves a line for the eastern border from Hazar-Enan to Shepham.

[11]The border shall descend from Shepham to *the Riblah,* to the east of Ain; the border shall descend, abutting the slope of the Sea of Chinnereth, to the east.

[12]The border shall descend along the Jordan, with its concluding stretches reaching the Dead Sea. This shall be your land, delimited by its surrounding borders.

[13]Moses then commanded the Israelite people as follows: This is the land that you shall grant as an estate by lot, which YHWH commanded to grant to the nine tribes, and one-half of a tribe.

[14]For the tribe of the Reubenites have already taken possession, according to their patriarchal "houses," as have the Gadites, according to their patriarchal "houses"; and one-half of the tribe of Manasseh have taken possession of their estates.

[15]The two tribes and one-half of a tribe have taken possession of their estates on the other side of the Jordan from Jericho, all the way to the east.

[16]Then YHWH addressed Moses as follows:

[17]Following are the names of the personages who shall apportion land to you as estates: Eleazar, the priest, and Joshua, son of Nun.

[18]You shall enlist one chieftain, one chieftain from each tribe to apportion the land.

[19]Following are the names of the personages: Representing the tribe of Judah—Caleb, son of Jephunneh.

[20]And representing the Simeonite tribe—Samuel, son of Ammihud.

[21]Representing the tribe of Benjamin—Elidad, son of Chislon.

[22]And representing the Danite tribe—a chieftain—Bukki, son of Jogli.

[23]Representing the Josephites: Representing the Manassite tribe, a chieftain—Hanniel, son of Ephod.

[24]And representing the Ephraimite tribe, a chieftain—Kemuel, son of Shiphtan.

[25]And representing the Zebulunite tribe, a chieftain—Elizaphan, son of Parnach.

[26]And representing the Issacharite tribe, a chieftain—Paltiel, son of Azzan.

[27]Representing the Asherite tribe, a chieftain—Ahihud, son of Shelomi.

[28]And representing the Naphtalite tribe, a chieftain—Pedahel, son of Ammihud.

[29]These are the ones whom YHWH commanded to install the Israelite people in their estates in the Land of Canaan.

35 [1]YHWH addressed Moses in the Plains of Moab, across the Jordan from Jericho, as follows:

[2]Issue a command to the Israelite people to allocate to the Levites, from the apportioned estate acquired by them, towns to reside in, and you shall allocate to the Levites, as well, town plots in their environs.

[3]The towns shall serve them for settlement, and the plots shall be for their cattle and possession, and all of their livestock.

[4]The urban plots that you shall allocate to the Levites: From the town wall and outside [they shall extend] one thousand cubits, all around.

[5]You shall measure off, outside of the town, two thousand cubits as the eastern limit, and two thousand cubits as the southern limit, and two thousand cubits as the western limit, and two thousand cubits as the northern limit, with the town at the center. Such shall be your town plots.

[6]The towns that you shall allocate to the Levites: The six towns of asylum that you will allocate [as places] where the [accused] murderer may flee; and in addition to them, you shall allocate forty-two towns.

[7]Total of towns which you shall allocate to the Levites: forty-eight towns, them and their urban plots.

[8]The towns that you shall allocate from the acquired estate of the Israelite people: From the numerous you shall allocate many, and from the sparse you shall allocate few; each [tribe], commensurate with the estate which he is to receive, shall he allocate of his towns to the Levites.

[9]YHWH addressed Moses as follows:

[10]Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: You are now crossing the Jordan into the Land of Canaan.

[11]You shall make accessible to yourselves towns which will serve you as towns of asylum, where an [accused] murderer may flee, one who slays a human being inadvertently.

[12]These towns shall serve you as places of asylum from a restorer, so that the [accused] murderer will not meet death until he stands before the communal assembly for judgment.

[13]The towns you shall allocate: You shall have six towns of asylum.

[14]Three of the towns you shall allocate on the other side of the Jordan, and the other three towns in the land of Canaan. They shall serve as towns of asylum.

[15]These six towns shall serve as asylum for the Israelite people and for the resident alien sojourning in their midst, [as places] where anyone who inadvertently slays a human being may flee.

[16]But if one struck another with an iron implement so that he died, he is, indeed, a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death.

[17]Or if one struck another with a deadly stone hand [tool] so that he died from it, he is, indeed, a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death.

[18]Or if he struck him with a deadly wooden hand implement so that he died, he is, indeed, a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death.

[19]The restorer of the blood, he, himself, shall execute the murderer; he shall execute him upon encountering him.

[20]Or if one knocked another down in passionate hatred, or hurled something at him with prior intent so that he died;

[21]or if one struck another with his hand in enmity so that died, the slayer shall be put to death, for he is a murderer; the avenger of the blood, himself, shall execute the murderer upon encountering him.

[22]If, however, one knocked another down suddenly, without enmity, or threw any sort of tool at him without prior intent;

[23]or let fall on him any deadly stone without noticing, so that he died—in a case where one was not the other's enemy, or seeking to do him harm—

[24]the communal assembly shall adjudicate between the slayer and the restorer of the blood according to the [above] legal norms.

[25]The communal assembly shall rescue the homicide from the hand of the restorer of the blood; the communal assembly shall bring him back to the town of asylum where he had fled, and he shall reside there until the death of the High Priest who had been anointed with the sacred oil.

[26]Should the [accused] murderer ever depart the boundary of his town of asylum where he had fled,

[27]and the restorer of the blood overtake him outside the border of his town

of asylum, and the restorer of the blood murder the [accused] murderer, he is not to be charged with a capital crime.

[28]For he (= the [accused] murderer) must reside in his town of asylum until the death of the High Priest; only after the death of the High Priest may the [accused] murderer return to the district of his acquired estate.

[29]These shall serve you as a judicial statute throughout your generations, in all of your settlements.

[30]When a person slays a human being, the murderer may be executed only on the testimony of witnesses. A single witness may not testify against a human being liable [to the sentence] of death.

[31]You may accept ransom for the life of a murderer who has been condemned to death; he must surely be put to death.

[32]Nor may you accept ransom in lieu of flight to one's town of asylum, [allowing one] to reside in the land prior to the death of the Priest.

[33]You must not desecrate the land where you reside, for bloodshed desecrates the land, and the land will not be granted expiation for the blood that has been shed in it except through the blood of him who sheds it.

[34]You must not defile the land wherein you reside, in whose midst I [also] maintain a residence; for I, YHWH, maintain a residence among the Israelite people.

36 [1]The heads of the patriarchal "houses" of the clan of the sons of Gilead, son of Machir, son of Manasseh, of the Josephite clans came forward, and stated [their case] before Moses and before the tribal chieftains, the heads of the patriarchal "houses" of Israel.

[2]They said: "YHWH commanded my lord to grant the land as ancestral territory to the Israelite people by lot, yet my lord was [also] commanded by YHWH to grant the ancestral territory of Zelophehad, our brother, to his daughters.

[3]"Now, were they to be married to anyone affiliated with the other Israelite tribes, their ancestral territory would be subtracted from our ancestral territory and would be annexed to the ancestral territory of the tribe into which they married, thereby being subtracted from the ancestral territory apportioned to us by lot.

[4]"Now, even though the Jubilee will occur for the Israelites, the ancestral territory [of these] would be annexed to the ancestral territory of that tribe into which they married. Their ancestral territory would thus be subtracted from our ancestral territory."

[5]Thereupon, Moses issued the following command to the Israelite people by order of YHWH: "The tribe of the Josephites speak correctly.

[6]"This is the word that YHWH has commanded regarding Zelophehad's

daughters: They may be married to whomsoever suits them, so long as they marry into a clan belonging to their father's tribe.

[7]"An ancestral territory may not be transferred from one tribe to another. Rather, each of the Israelites must maintain a hold on the ancestral territory of his own tribe.

[8]"Any daughter inheriting an ancestral territory, from among the Israelite tribes, may only marry a person from a clan affiliated with her father's tribe, in order that each of the Israelites may retain possession of his own ancestral territory.

[9]"An ancestral territory may not be transferred from one tribe to another; rather, each of the Israelites must maintain a hold on his own ancestral territory."

[10]Zelophehad's daughters did precisely as YHWH commanded Moses.

[11]Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah and Noah, daughters of Zelophehad, were married to cousins of theirs.

[12]They were married to men from the clans of the sons of Manasseh, son of Joseph, so that their ancestral territory remained the property of a clan affiliated with their father's tribe.

[13]These are the commandments and the judicial regulations that YHWH commanded, through Moses, to the Israelite people in the Plains of Moab, across the Jordan from Jericho.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF NUMBERS (CONTINUED)

◆

(All this after) I, verily I destroyed the Amorites before their advance;
Whose height equaled the height of cedars,
And who was mighty as oaks.
(After) I destroyed his fruit from above,
And his roots down below.
(After) I, verily I brought you up out of the land of Egypt,
And led you through the wilderness for forty years,
To take possession of the land of the Amorites. (Amos 2:9–10)

Hallelu-yah! Give praise to the name of YHWH! . . .
Who smote many nations,
And slew numerous kings.
(Who smote) Sihon, the king of the Amorites,
And Og, the king of the Bashan;
And all of the kingdoms of Canaan.
And then granted their land as a territorial possession,
A territorial possession to Israel, his people. (Ps 135:1, 10–11)

The eighth-century prophet, Amos, addressing an audience of northern Israelites in Bethel, castigated his people for their ingratitude, evidenced by their blatant disobedience of God's moral commandments. After all that Israel's God had done on behalf of his people in defeating their enemies, he surely deserved Israel's loyalty. One reciting the above passages against the background of Numbers 21–36 will identify the mighty Amorites of whom Amos spoke as those of Transjordan, not those of Canaan proper. The later author of Psalm 135 leaves no doubt on this score, and names Sihon as the king of the Amorites, and his domain is differentiated from "the kingdoms of Canaan," west of the Jordan.

With equal emphasis on the Transjordanian factor, Numbers 21–36 portray the adventures of the Israelites east of Edom and east of the Jordan, and in so doing provide a prehistory of the significant Israelite settlements in Gilead, and north of it. Furthermore, these traditions lay the background for the ongoing, historical relations between Israelites, especially the kingdom of northern Israel, and the Transjordanian peoples, Moabites and others, down through the centuries. One has the dual impression that the Transjordanian Israelite community had much to do with the unfolding of biblical history, and as well, that the situation in the interior, east of the Jordan, was of serious concern to the Judean and Israelite kingdoms at many historical junctures.

On the ideological level, the issue of the legitimacy of the Transjordanian Israelite community appears and fades throughout this section of Numbers, suggesting that the concept of a larger Promised Land stood in tension with the Cisjordanian delimitation of the Land of Canaan (Kallai 1997). In the priestly material, further ingredients of Israelite law and ritual continue to be presented in anticipation of the crossing of the Jordan into Canaan proper, carrying forward the overall agenda of the priestly writers of Numbers, who sought to trace all that subsequently became important in Israelite religion and society to the Wilderness Period.

The present Introduction resumes where section D of the *Introduction to the Book of Numbers* entitled: "Numbers in Context" (Levine 1993:88–109) left off. Whereas the **content** of the entire book of Numbers was discussed in the opening *Introduction to the Book of Numbers*, the treatment of **context** was limited to Numbers 1–20, the actual scope of Volume I of the Commentary. It was thought at the time that the process of preparing the Commentary on Numbers 21–36 would produce further insight into the historical and cultural context of the latter part of this biblical book, replete as it is with fascinating poetic and historiographic sources, and significant legal and ritual texts. This expectation has proved to be true, and it is now possible to venture an interpretation of Numbers 21–36 in context.

There is relatively little that needs to be corrected or added regarding the overall content and composition of Numbers, as these features were outlined in the opening *Introduction to the Book of Numbers*. The reader will find additional source-critical observations and reflections on composition in the Introductions to individual chapters, and in Notes and Comments. As an example, it has become possible to appreciate the pivotal role of Numbers 32 more fully than before. This single chapter serves to connect all that preceded it, beginning in Numbers 21 and continuing through Numbers 26–27, with all that follows it in Numbers 33–36, and, significantly, it represents the last cluster of JE passages in the book of Numbers. Its source-critical analysis proved, upon further reflection, to be even more complicated than was anticipated (see Levine 1993:79). Rather than attempt a precise, source-critical breakdown of Numbers 32 into JE and P, a new approach was utilized, one that differentiated between (a) a small core of relatively early historiography and (b) a basically Deuteronomistic conception of Israelite settlement in Transjordan, later amplified by priestly writers. All of this is explained in the Introduction to Numbers 32 and in the comments.

Section C of the *Introduction to the Book of Numbers*, entitled: "Texts, Versions, Translations and Commentaries" (Levine 1993:84–88) can be enhanced and updated. We now possess *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* XII (*Qumran Cave* 4–VII), which presents critical editions with commentary of 4Q Num^b by Nathan Jastram, and of 4Q Lev-Num^a by Eugene Ulrich (Jastram 1994; Ulrich 1994). S. W. Crawford (1999) reviews the extant Qumran manuscripts of the Torah, listing a total of five manuscripts preserving parts of Numbers, from Qumran caves 2 and 4. We also possess Avraham Tal's critical edition of the Samaritan Torah (Tal 1994), and the recent publication of the Leningrad Codex makes that precious manuscript available to scholars (Freedman 1998).

D. NUMBERS 21–36 IN CONTEXT (CONTINUED)

The differentiation adopted in the *Introduction to the Book of Numbers* between priestly writings, on the one hand, and, on the other, sources considered to be earlier than the priestly material, such as poetic selections, JE historiography, and independent narratives also will be followed here. We begin, therefore, with a contextual consideration of the nonpriestly content of Numbers 21–36, against the background of similar, relatively early sources in Numbers 1–20. This will be followed by the contextual treatment of the no less interesting priestly materials preserved in Numbers 21–36.

1. JE and Other Nonpriestly Sources in Context

In Numbers 1–20, the burden of the JE historiographers was to lay the foundation for the eventual Israelite settlement and conquest of Canaan in the presettlement Wilderness Period, and to explain why the Israelites were eventually to take a route through the wilderness east of Edom and up through Transjordan. These writers consequently focused their attention on encounters with the interior peoples. After Exodus (16:8–16) had recorded an initial conflict with the Amalekites, whose military bases reached all the way to the Wall of Egypt, Numbers 10:29–32 depict early relations between Moses and friendly Midianites, who were probably Kenites in disguise. In so doing, the JE writers accounted for the fact that the Kenites were exempt from the general policy affecting other Canaanites in the postsettlement period. In fact, it remained for the priestly writers to create a legendary record of conflict with the Midianites (Numbers 31, a conflict anticipated in Num 25:16–18).

The JE historiographers of Numbers 1–20 forecast the role of Caleb and his clan in the conquest of the Judean hill country by portraying this hero as alone in keeping the faith when the other tribal leaders despaired of the conquest program. (Joshua, the son of Nun, figures only in the priestly tradition, at this point). They identified Kadesh as the principal Israelite outpost in the preconquest period, thereby refracting the actual defensive function of Kadesh and its fortress network during the United Monarchy, and in subsequent periods, especially during the reign of Josiah (Numbers 13–14). Finally, Numbers 20:14–21, reflecting later dangers from Edomite expansion that began in the eighth century B.C.E., set the stage for chronic conflicts with this people. Considerable attention was also paid to issues of leadership. In diction that recalls the Davidic court history, Numbers 11–12 assign preeminent status to Moses as God's most intimate prophet and most trusted servant. This theme, originating in Exodus, is reinforced in the nonpriestly core of Numbers 16.

Only several brief notices prepare us for the circumvention of Edom, Moab and Ammon by way of the Red Sea and these, in effect, trigger the entire Transjordanian saga that takes up Numbers 21–36. Thus, in Numbers 14:25, the Israelites are ordered to proceed by way of the Red Sea because the Amalekites and Canaanites controlled the Negeb. The Israelites nevertheless attempt an attack into the Negeb hill country, only to be repulsed by these very forces (Num 14:44–45). Enter Numbers 21:1–3, an alternative report of the same Negeb encounter from which, in contrast, the Israelites emerged victorious. With Deuteronomic overtones, Numbers 21:1–3 may preserve a genuine record of a successful, early incursion into the western Negeb, as explained in the Comments to Numbers 21.

a. Heshbon and "North Moab." Numbers 21 (more precisely Num 21:4–35) carries a heavy literary burden; it brings the Israelites all the way from a point east of Edom to the Plains of Moab, across the Jordan from Jericho. Even more significant, in contextual terms, is its record of early Israelite settlement in Transjordan. It can be shown that concern in Numbers 21 is limited to the so-called Mishor, namely, Moab north of the Arnon. This focus is confirmed, inter alia, by the brief poetic citations in Numbers 21:14–20 that document the Israelite arrival at the Arnon. A proper analysis of Numbers 21:4–35 must, however, differentiate between the poetic selections embedded in the narrative, especially the Heshbon ballad (Num 21:27–30), and the JE prose narrative. The agenda of the prose narrative is to justify Israelite hegemony over Moab north of the Arnon on the grounds that before the Israelites first came on the scene, the Amorites had already taken possession of this territory from the Moabites. The subsequent Israelite defeat of the Amorites gave them title to this territory, which they settled before the entered Canaan proper. Moabite claims to the same territory were thus invalid.

If this is the agenda of the JE writers, then the brief poetic excerpts in Numbers 21:14–20, and the Heshbon Ballad, are best seen as celebrating the Israelite conquest of North Moab at a later period, not as glorifying a much earlier Amorite conquest of this disputed territory. The reference to Heshbon as Sihon's capital is to be understood as merely a traditional, and quite sarcastic embellishment, as if to say that even such a heavily fortified city fell to the Israelite conquerors. As will be argued in the Comments to Numbers 21, the reference to Sihon's capture of Moab in Numbers 21:29b is probably an interpolation in the spirit of the JE narrative. There is no other explicit reference to Sihon's capture of Moab, only to a conquering force deployed from Heshbon. This would have been an Israelite force, by most indications.

Once the above exegetical determinations have been made, it is clear to see that Numbers 21 is exceedingly rich in historical indicators, some of which are considerably subtle, however. From the archaeological point of view, the extensive surveys and excavations at Heshbon and in the Moabite plain reveal that the Heshbon traditions are imprecise as far as that specific town is concerned, because Heshbon, itself, was not fortified in the early Iron Age. More recent excavations demonstrate, nonetheless, that other nearby sites, such as Tell el-ʿUmeiri, were actually fortified at that time. The existence of a fortified Amorite capital in central Transjordan in the early-to-mid-twelfth century B.C.E. is, therefore, realistic from the archaeological point of view, assuming that we can identify the Amorites of whom Numbers 21 speaks. These may have been groups of North Syrians absorbed into Canaan and Transjordan at the beginning of the Iron Age, including immigrants coming from the collapsed kingdom of Amurru. Like certain groups of Hittites who established city-states in Syria after the fall of the New Hittite empire, such North Syrians may have sought to reestablish themselves in Transjordan. This view has been most elaborately advanced by George Mendenhall (1992). We should not, therefore, disavow the core of historicity in the JE tradition, but in affirming this core, we run smack into the absence of independent evidence of an Israelite presence in Transjordan at such an early period.

Clear extra-biblical evidence of Israelite settlement in Moab north of the Arnon is available from the ninth century B.C.E., most notably from the Moabite Mesha Stele that refers to Gadites in North Moab, and of the projects of the northern Israelite king, Omri, and his successors in that region. The evidence of the Mesha Stele correlates with that of certain biblical traditions regarding Gadite expansion, as, for instance, Deuteronomy 33:20–21, and with the testimony of Numbers 32:39–42 on the Transjordanian conquests of some Manassite clans. Based on a close reading of the Mesha Stele, where Gadite presence in North Moab is described as originating "since before memory," and a comparison of its reports with inner-biblical evidence, one could date the earliest Israelite settlements in central Transjordan to the eleventh century B.C.E., more probably to the period of the United Monarchy in the tenth century B.C.E. Under Omri in the early ninth century B.C.E., these settlements were considerably expanded, which is what led Mesha to undertake counter efforts to regain sovereignty over northern Moab, beginning at about the middle of the ninth century B.C.E. As for the Heshbon Ballad, itself, it most probably informs us of Moabite history in the ninth century, perhaps somewhat earlier, based on the sites in Moab that it mentions, and whose archaeological history points to that period.

In the Comments to Numbers 21, an attempt will be made to fix the probable *Sitz-im-Leben* of Numbers 21:4–35 in all its components. The upshot of that inquiry is that the original setting of the Heshbon Ballad would best fit the period that Karl Heinz Bernhardt (1982) calls "*pax Aramaica,*" namely, the years before the death of Ahab (852) and the usurpation of Jehu (845). It was then that the Omrides, with the support of the Arameans, had made significant inroads in Transjordan. As for the JE historiography, it is based primarily on the Elohist, and as such its core would best fit the period prior to the establishment of the anti-Assyrian coalition under Hadadezer in the 850s B.C.E., although later writers adapted this historiography considerably. To sum up: Both the Heshbon Ballad and the Elohistic core of the JE historiography point to the latter part of Omri's reign and to the reign of Ahab, before Hazael ascended the throne of Aram and Mesha began his campaign to regain northern Moab. To put it simply, Numbers 21 was aimed primarily at legitimating Israelite sovereignty, or hegemony over most of the area east of the Jordan and north of the Arnon.

The Heshbon Ballad was later recast by the JE writers as early testimony of Amorite hegemony over an area disputed by northern Israel and Moab, in support of Israelite claims. There is logic to the view that Numbers 21:12–35 derive from a different source, and were introduced with the intent of focusing attention on relations with Moab into what had been a rather bland narrative of the Israelite march to the Plains of Moab. Against the background of Numbers 20:14–21, Numbers 21 in its final form portrays the Israelites on the march, avoiding armed conflict with Ammon and Moab, as they had with Edom, until they reached the Arnon. The last JE historiographers to work on Numbers 21 portray Moab north of the Arnon as Amorite territory, and carry us along on the Israelite route to the Jordan, recording Israelite victories over the Amorites. This tradition was apparently known to the prophet Amos soon after the middle of the eighth century B.C.E.

b. The Balaam Pericope: Transjordan and the Religion of Israel. The Balaam Pericope will receive an extensive treatment in Notes to Numbers 22–24 and in the Comments, and it would be unduly repetitive to enter into exegetical and literary questions, or to discuss the fascinating phenomenological import of the entire Pericope at this point. The present, introductory discussion is intended merely to highlight issues of historical and religious context based on the assessment that the Balaam orations, in particular, speak for a specific religious orientation which, in our view, has not been adequately clarified.

The Balaam Pericope is recognized as an independent unit within the Book of Numbers, composed of poetic selections and prose narratives, and a tale about Balaam's jenny. As was the case with Numbers 21, a proper analysis requires us to differentiate between the four poetic orations of Balaam (and the brief oracles appended to them), and the prose sections of the Pericope, for the purpose of exploring historical context. The poetic orations can be compared directly with the Balaam texts from Deir ʿAlla, a site east of the Jordan on the Jabbok/Zerqa river. These were written in a kindred language, and they also exhibit a poetic character. The Comments to the Balaam Pericope will, therefore, include an edition of Combination I of the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions, and excerpts from Combination II. Rarely has the recent discovery of an extra-biblical source had so direct a bearing on the interpretation of biblical texts.

The prose narratives of the Balaam Pericope take their cue from the poems that antedate them, and proceed to develop a context of their own. In general, they speak for a thoroughly monotheistic point of view, whereas the religious orientation of the author of the four Balaam poems is less readily apparent. The basic question regarding the Balaam poems may be formulated as follows: "To which divine power or powers was Balaam bound?" We must explain why it was that Balaam presents himself as one powerless to curse Israel and bound to the will of divine powers that favor Israel. One would have expected him to appeal to the power of the gods of Moab, or to that of his own gods, whether Aramean or Ammonite, as differing traditions would identify his origins. Instead, it is stressed from the outset that Balaam was constrained by powers solidly on Israel's side, and who are protecting Israel from harm. There is no battle between divine powers; no challenge by Balaam.

What does this unexpected posture imply? Does it mean that the power of YHWH, the God of Israel, dominated other peoples and lands, and controlled non-Israelite diviners, so that Balaam, the non-Israelite, was also under the power of Israel's God? This is surely how the prose narratives of the Balaam Pericope understood matters, but is it how the situation was perceived by the author of the poetic orations? The key to a proper understanding of the religious outlook informing the Balaam poems, as distinct from the later prose narratives, is the divine nomenclature employed in them. Whereas Balaam knows of YHWH's existence and acknowledges him as Israel's national God, who protects Israel and fights at their side (Num 23:8, 21), Balaam's titulary exhibits a veritable pantheon of West Semitic divine powers—El, Shaddai and Elyon, of whom the most prominent is El.

How is the divine name El being used in the Balaam orations? Is it an epithet of YHWH, used as a common noun in the sense of "deity, god," or is it a proper noun, referring to the West Semitic deity El? The virtually unique parallelism of *'ēl//YHWH* in the first poem (Num 23:8) suggests that usage of the name *'ēl* in the Balaam poems is discrete, not epithetical, and that El, not YHWH, is the deity empowering Balaam, whose words Balaam hears and whose visions he beholds. It is powerful El who brought Israel out of Egypt. This, in fact, may be the most significant point of contact between the biblical Balaam orations and the Balaam inscriptions from Deir 'Alla, in which El *('l)* is the presiding deity. It is El who forewarns the Transjordanian Balaam of the catastrophe to come, and who commissions him to rescue his land and people. It turns out, therefore, that both literary sources present Balaam as a messenger of El.

This above analysis suggests further that both sources, the biblical Balaam poems and the Deir 'Alla Balaam inscriptions, derive from a repertoire of El literature, exemplified elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible by such compositions as the parable on the King of Babylon preserved in Isaiah 14. It is worth noting that Combination II of the Deir 'Alla inscriptions, likewise an oracle of Sheol, shows remarkable thematic affinities to Isaiah 14. It is probable that the Deir 'Alla inscriptions speak for, and were composed by Gileadite Israelites who were El worshippers, primarily if not exclusively, since the name of YHWH never appears in the Deir 'Alla texts. Furthermore, the biblical Balaam poems may well have been composed in Gilead by fellow Israelite contemporaries, who worshipped YHWH as the national God of Israel, but not exclusively so, as we shall see. The similarity of the Deir 'Alla language to biblical Hebrew, and the thematic affinities between the two versions of the Balaam saga, would surely allow for the above conclusions.

The Deir 'Alla inscriptions can be dated to the early eighth century B.C.E., before the Assyrian campaigns of 734–721 B.C.E. that ravaged both Transjordan and the northern kingdom of Israel, and resulted in mass deportations from these regions. In the early-to-mid-eighth century B.C.E., the population of Gilead was largely Israelite, making it realistic to attribute the Balaam inscriptions from Deir 'Alla to Israelite authors. It would be reasonable to date the biblical Balaam poems to the same period, and to suggest that we have represented in them a particular phase in the development of Israelite religion.

The synthesis of El with YHWH, so prevalent in certain biblical traditions, and the triumph of exclusive Yahwism were yet to be actualized. The overarching regional pantheon was still dominant within the larger framework of Israelite society. In effect, the Balaam orations of Numbers 23–24 are stating that El, head of the regional pantheon, had redeemed Israel from Egypt and was now bringing this people to its land. The deities of the regional pantheon, whom Balaam served, and who were headed by El, had commanded him to bless Israel, forbidding him to pronounce curses upon this people who was blessed by them. To put it simply, Balaam's own chief deity, El, was rendering him powerless! This is why there is no battle of divine powers in the Balaam poems.

The authors of the prose narratives reinterpreted this dynamic drastically in the spirit of triumphant Yahwism, referring to YHWH frequently and consistently as the sole power controlling both Balaam and his Moabite client, and protecting Israel. On this basis, one would tend to date the prose narratives of the Balaam Pericope to a considerably later period, when the synthesis of El and YHWH had been completed; when the reinterpretation of Israelite religion enunciated in Exodus 6 had been accepted. In Exodus 6 the Israelites are told, in effect, that the deity their forefathers had known as El was really YHWH all the time, except that YHWH had not revealed himself to them by his true name and identity. Now he had done so, to Moses and the Israelites in Egypt, and all that had been attributed to El was henceforth to be attributed to YHWH. This meant, in the first instance, that YHWH would liberate Israel from Egypt and assure Israel's conquest of the Promised Land.

If Numbers 21 confers legitimacy, even historical priority, upon the Transjordanian Israelites, and confirms their sovereignty over North Moab against Moabite counterclaims to the same territory, the Balaam Pericope follows up with a theological formulation of Israel's rights to the Transjordanian territories. The Balaam poems state that the regional pantheon headed by El, in which YHWH is a member deity, granted the Israelites victory over the Transjordanian nations, whereas the prose narratives of the Balaam Pericope attribute all of this to YHWH exclusively. There is a progression through the four poems: The first poem states that powerful Israel, unaligned with other nations, is protected by both El and YHWH, and will be victorious on its own. This is Balaam's own awareness; he is overwhelmed by what he beholds, and has no faith in the efficacy of his magical powers. The second poem states that El will not renege on his word, and that YHWH stands with his people, with the result that Israel, strong as a lion, will be victorious. Balaam's magic won't work against Jacob/Israel. The third poem elegizes Israel's power over Amalek, probably alluding to Saul's victories, some of which occurred outside Canaan and in Transjordan. It once again extols El's power, while mentioning that the Israelite encampment radiates YHWH's might. Finally, the fourth poem, alluding in the first instance to heroic David as the "star" and "meteor," and through double entendre as the legitimate sovereign from the tribe of Judah (Hebrew *šēbeṭ* "staff"), predicts the devastation of Moab and Edom by Israel in the distant future. The allusion may also be to Omri and his successors, who extended Israelite settlement in Transjordan. In any event, the triumphal tone of the poems would be most appropriate at periods when Israelites dominated North Moab, a situation that would have changed once Mesha, the King of Moab, had recaptured its major towns. This places the Heshbon Ballad and the Balaam poems in the same time frame, in the years preceding 852 B.C.E. (see above).

The four brief orations attributed to Balaam (Num 24:19–24) are too cryptic to allow for precise contextual analysis. They were appended to the four major poems on a topical basis, and so as to endow Balaam with the aura of a prophet to the nations.

c. The Baal Peor Episode. If the triumphal tone of the Heshbon Ballad and of the Balaam orations celebrates Israelite good fortunes in North Moab, the Baal Peor incident, in its JE formulation (Num 25:1–5), casts a shadow over the religious loyalty of the Transjordanian Israelites. It belongs with those biblical traditions that deny legitimacy to them, rather than with those that legitimate the Israelites of Transjordan, like Numbers 21:4–35 and Numbers 22–24. In this vein, one recalls Joshua 22:13–34, a later polemic against the religious practices of Transjordanian Israelites. In a sense, the Baal Peor episode belongs with Numbers 32, to be discussed below.

It would be important to clarify why the Baal Peor passage is placed where it is. Was it to transmit the message that even the new generation of Israelites was not immune from pagan tendencies? It would seem that its original intent was otherwise. Hosea 9:10, a statement attributable to northern Israelite creativity of the early-to-mid-eighth century B.C.E., makes reference to the Baal Peor episode as a known event that occurred during the Wilderness Period. In a manner similar to Deuteronomy 32, it speaks of YHWH's first meeting with the Israelites in the wilderness. Israel was initially faithful and all was going well until the people fell from grace at Baal Peor just before crossing the Jordan. At a further point, Hosea (13:4–6) attributes the ungrateful recalcitrance of the Israelites to their prosperity, again in a tone very similar to Deuteronomy 32. All of this contrasts sharply with the theme, so prominent in the historiographic traditions of the Torah, that the Israelites of the Exodus were weak and of little faith, unprepared for the conquest of the Promised Land, whereas the new generation was heroic and capable.

It is reasonable to suggest, therefore, that Numbers 25:1–5 share a common context with Hosea 9 and with Deuteronomy 32, namely, the *Sitz-im-Leben* of certain northern Israelite writers of the mid-eighth century B.C.E.

These authors retrojected the deterioration of Israel's relationship with its God into the Wilderness Period as a presaging of what they saw happening in the northern kingdom of Israel and in Gilead of their own day. One would gather as much from the historical associations so prominent in Hosea 11–12, which refer to the sin of Baal worship and to the iniquity of Gilead.

d. Legitimate Israelite Settlement in Transjordan: Reuben, Gad and the Manassite Clans. Numbers 32 marks a departure in the biblical traditions pertaining to the Transjordanian Israelites. In the earliest biblical sources on the Israelite conquest and settlement of Transjordan one finds no awareness of a problem of legitimacy; Transjordanian Israelites are like all others, subject to the same criticism as other northern Israelites, especially, and held up to the same praise when they were deserving of it. Patriarchs offered sacrifices and experienced theophanies in Gilead, and the Israelite conquests in Transjordan were heroic at the outset. The Israelite league predicated in the Song of Deborah (Judges 5) included Transjordanian tribes, and Deuteronomy 33:6, 20–21 speak of Reuben and Gad as successful, blessed tribes. True, Numbers 21 reflects the perceived need to justify Israelite conquests east of the Jordan in much the same way that the right of Israel to Canaan must be justified against the claims of other nations and previous inhabitants. But this is different from the need to grant a special dispensation to certain Israelite tribes and clans, allowing them to remain east of the Jordan, an outlook that bespeaks an inner-Israelite polemic.

The first signal that the principal venture was the conquest and settlement of Cisjordan, or Canaan, and that there might be a problem with the status of Israelites who settled in Transjordan, is conveyed by the theme of "crossing the Jordan" into the land granted by God to Israel. Of course, the JE sources in Numbers 13–14 also presume that Cisjordan is the destination of the Israelites at Kadesh. Yet, the theme of "crossing the Jordan" as a way of expressing the duty to enter the land was probably introduced by core Deuteronomy (cf. Deut 12:10) and amplified by the Deuteronomist, who is the first to speak of the need for a dispensation to the two and one-half tribes, Reuben, Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh (Deut 2:31–3:16).

As such, Numbers 32 stands in sharp contrast to Genesis 31–32, in which Jacob's adventures just east of the Jordan serve as an etiology of Gilead's status as part of Israel. In effect, the Arameans have ceded Gilead and other parts of Transjordan to Israel and have withdrawn their forces, as symbolized by Laban's peace with Jacob and by Jacob's transformation into Israel. That point of view undoubtedly antedated the Deuteronomic critique of Israelite religious behavior, a critique that was likewise voiced for the first time in northern Israel of Second Hosea's time, in the mid-eighth century B.C.E. Although the Deuteronomic movement toward religious reform of the eighth century was not exclusively targeted at Gilead, it would seem that it impacted attitudes toward the Gileadite Israelites, much in the spirit of the prophecies of Hosea that call attention to the Baal Peor episode. It would be reasonable to date Numbers 32, except for Numbers 32:39–42, an early passage that reports on Machirite settlement in the Bashan, later than core Deuteronomy. In turn, the schematic references to "half of the tribe of Manasseh" in Numbers 32 would postdate even the Deuteronomist.

In summary, Numbers 32, the last locus of nonpriestly material in the book of Numbers, is a remarkable mélange of traditions on the Transjordanian Israelites. One could see in this chapter an attempt to rehabilitate them by insisting that they had done their duty by their fellow Israelites, and should be accepted as legitimate. Such rehabilitation would be required only if their legitimacy had been challenged to start with, and such a challenge would fit in with the thrust of the Deuteronomic movement in northern Israel of the eighth century B.C.E.

2. Priestly Materials in Context

As was true of Numbers 1–20, priestly writings dominate Numbers 21–36. Except for Numbers 21–24, the Baal Peor episode (Num 25:1–5), and certain relatively early passages, not always clearly identifiable, in Numbers 32, virtually everything we read in Numbers 21–36 bears the priestly imprint. In light of what has been said about the Transjordanian agenda of the nonpriestly sources in Numbers 21–36, it should be emphasized that the priestly materials are primarily focused on the Israelite conquest and settlement of Canaan, west of the Jordan. All ritual prescriptions as well as the program of land distribution to the Israelite tribes are presented in anticipation of crossing the Jordan into Canaan. Nonetheless, there is some concern with the Transjordanian agenda even in the priestly materials. The laws of homicide and the towns of asylum are projected for both sides of the Jordan, the priestly embellishments of Numbers 32 deal with the Transjordanian Israelite territories, and there are other indications of this same awareness in the priestly materials of Numbers 21–36. Actually, the issues that inform the priestly materials of Numbers 21–36 are rather complex, and not consistently coordinated.

Rather than proceed to discuss the context of the priestly texts in their order of appearance, it would be preferable to engage the major priestly themes of Numbers 21–36 in topical sequence. We begin with the festival calendar and regimen of public worship ordained in Numbers 28–29, to which a law of vows was appended (Numbers 30). Following this, the law of homicide preserved in Numbers 35, including the subject of the Levitical towns and Towns of Asylum, will be discussed in context. Next comes the allocation of

Canaan to the ten and one-half tribes. This theme is first introduced, rather implicitly, in the census of Numbers 26, which encompasses all of the tribes and the Levites. This second census is anticipatory of the total settlement and conquest program, on both sides of the Jordan, a concern that carries forward in Numbers 27 in connection with the dispensation to the daughters of Zelophehad (with a corollary in Numbers 36). Finally, Numbers 34 presents a geographic delimitation of Canaan, followed by instructions for the distribution of the land to the ten and one-half tribes. Numbers 34 assumes that the problem of the Transjordanian tribes has already been resolved. This distribution will be administered by Joshua, the son of Nun, who took over from Moses in Numbers 27:16–23, and Eleazar, Aaron's son, who had been active for quite a while.

This leaves several agenda items relating to the experience of the Israelites before crossing the Jordan, which will be taken up in conclusion. There is, first of all, a record of the route of the Israelite march all the way from Egypt to the Plains of Moab, which displays some peculiarities of its own when compared to other biblical evidence on the Exodus and wilderness routes (Numbers 33). Then, there is the Midianite theme, which begins in Numbers 25:6–18, an addendum to the Baal Peor incident, and continues in Numbers 31 with a record of a war with the Midianites and rules for the distribution of spoils. A priestly writer took the occasion to insert an endorsement of the Aaronic line down through Eleazar and Phinehas by depicting Phinehas as a zealous priest (Num 25:10–15). Finally, the reader is referred to the commentary on Numbers 32 for a discussion of the priestly and other enhancements of the Transjordanian agenda.

a. The Public Cult of Israel and the Religious Calendar. Numbers 28–29 present the major priestly code of practice governing the public cult of biblical Israel. It is the most elaborate and systematic text of its kind in the Hebrew Bible. Historically, as contrasted with its traditional presentation, this code is best understood as speaking for the cult of the Second Temple of Jerusalem, although some of its rites surely go back to earlier times. It should be studied against the background of the earlier cultic calendar preserved in Leviticus 23, essentially part of the Holiness Code, and with due attention to the overall history of sacrificial worship in Israel, and in the ancient Near East, generally. The author/compiler of Numbers 28–29 was surely cognizant of the primary parts of Leviticus 23, and in some cases picks up where Leviticus 23 left off. In other instances, the provisions of Numbers 28–29 reverse the trend of Leviticus 23, reinterpreting some of its provisions and introducing new elements. It seems, as an example, that the emphasis within the Holiness Code on the Sabbath Day as determining the scheduling of the Pentecost did not persist in later priestly legislation.

The conclusion that Numbers 28–29 speak for the postexilic cult of Jerusalem is basically a diachronic judgment, based on an analysis of sequential developments in the modes and structure of public worship. Numbers 28–29 catalogue daily public worship, the public rites for the Sabbath Day, for the New Moons and annual festivals, as well as for the New Moon of the seventh month, hardly a "New Year" at this stage, and more likely an occasion to herald the Sukkoth festival, coming in the middle of the month. The tenth day of the seventh month is elsewhere known as *Yôm Kippûrîm*, an annual Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16).

Numbers 28–29 know of only one legitimate altar, and say nothing about sacrificial celebrations in any of the Israelite settlements, although there is reference to local, communal gatherings. This policy is explained by the fact that legislation in the priestly source (P) is predicated on the centralization of the cult, a Deuteronomic (= D) doctrine that restricted all sacrificial activity to one, central temple, historically the First Temple of Jerusalem. This dependence of P on D explains a great deal about the development of the Israelite-Jewish festivals, a subject to be clarified as we proceed.

Several significant features of the cultic code of Numbers 28–29 further point to its postexilic provenance. In the area of daily worship, we note the two-phased *tāmîd* "regular, daily offering," consisting of one burnt offering in the morning and a second before evening. This pattern is also evident in the special, daily grain offering of the High Priest, offered as a holocaust, and designated as *tāmîd*. Half of it is to be offered in the morning and half before evening (Lev 6:12–16). By surveying biblical evidence on daily temple worship we learn that no independently attested source from the period of the First Temple provided for more than one public *tāmîd*, offered in the morning. Thus, 2 Kings 16:15, referring to cultic practice during the reign of Ahaz, king of Judah, speaks of "the burnt offering of the morning" (*ʿōlat habbōqur)*, and "the grain offering of the evening" *(minḥat hāʿereb)*, also alluded to in the account of Elijah's encounter with the Baal prophets (1 Kings 18:36). Most revealing as to historical provenance is the fact that Ezekiel 46, the chapter that outlines the public cult, and a patently late source, knows of only one burnt offering in the morning (Ezek 46:13–15). In effect, this suggests that as of the destruction of the First Temple of Jerusalem we have no evidence of a two-phased *tāmîd*. The only other Torah reference to this double rite comes in Exodus 29, also a late priestly source (Levine 1965). It is in overtly postexilic literature that we find references to the two-phased *tāmîd*, as in 1 Chronicles 16, for instance. That chapter represents a later version of 2 Samuel 6, the narrative of the installation of the Ark in Jerusalem. In 2 Samuel, we read that David offered *zebāḥîm* "sacred meals" on this occasion, whereas in 1 Chronicles 16 we read of *tāmîd labbōqer welāʿereb* "regular offerings each morning and evening."

The change from "sacred meals" in 2 Samuel to "burnt offerings" in 1 Chronicles points to yet another variable in the history of Israelite sacrificial worship, namely, the progression, or development from presentational offerings to burnt altar offerings. In Numbers 28–29, the *'ōlāh* "burnt offering," a holocaust, dominates the public cult wherein a composite sacrificial rite is the normal form of worship (except for the Sabbath, on which see below). There is, first of all, the *'ōlāh,* followed by the *minhah* "grain offering," and then by the libation of wine, Hebrew *nesek.* The last sacrifice to be listed in this administrative order, but which was in practice offered in advance of the *'ōlāh,* is the "sin offering," the *ḥaṭṭā't.* In effect, the purity of the Sanctuary was first confirmed by the *ḥaṭṭā't,* after which the daily regimen could commence. This composite structure reflects a long development that can be at least partially traced, and it carries through almost all of the public rites prescribed in Numbers 28–29. Offerings were customarily brought in multiple and symmetrical quantities, and it is this elaborate regimen that served the later Jewish tradition as the liturgical model of public worship, the final Torah statement.

The daily cult was most probably a public event from the outset, but aspects of the celebration of the Sabbath and other special occasions were at times domestic or family oriented in character, and almost always involved the members of the community and their families as participants. The provisions of Numbers 28–29 hardly address these aspects, and almost consistently focus on the priestly temple cult. Thus, all that we read about the Sabbath is that certain additional sacrifices are ordained for this weekly occasion; there is no reference to what Israelites should or should not do on the Sabbath Day in their homes and settlements. Furthermore, there is no other statement in the Torah prescribing public offerings on the Sabbath Day, although one would conclude from certain fairly early prophetic pronouncements that the Sabbath was an occasion for public celebration (Isa 1:13–14, Hos 2:13). It also must be significant that no advance purification of the Sanctuary, signaled by the *hatta't* sacrifice on other occasions, is prescribed for the Sabbath Day.

The same limited focus is true of prescriptions for the New Moon, a very ancient religious occasion with family significance as well as public features. It manifests the system of lunar calendation so basic to many ancient Near Eastern societies. Numbers 28–29 reflect the system of a vernal inception, introduced by Deuteronomy, so that the first month occurs in the spring, and the seventh month in the autumn of the year. The vernal inception is common to Deuteronomy and the priestly source. The system of registering months by ordinal numbers ("the first month, the seventh month," and so forth), however, was first introduced in the mid-to-late seventh century B.C.E., as indicated by the ostraca from Lachish and Arad, and it continued in use during the Achaemenid Period. In biblical sources it is to be found in 2 Kings and Jeremiah, and in Ezekiel 45: 18–25, with special reference to the holy days and festivals to be celebrated in the public cult of Jerusalem.

It would be repetitive to summarize here all that has been written in Notes and Comments concerning the development and scheduling of the annual festivals. We need only emphasize once again that festival legislation in the priestly source, in Leviticus 23 and in Numbers 28–29 (and even in Exodus 34), is predicated on the Deuteronomic reforms of the cult. These reforms were first promulgated by edict during the reign of Josiah, king of Judah, toward the end of the seventh century B.C.E., and required, in the first instance, that all sacrificial worship be restricted to the Temple of Jerusalem. This meant that festivals designated *ḥag* "pilgrimage festival" required celebrants to be present in Jerusalem, and invalidated the traditional pilgrimages to local and regional cult sites of which we read in biblical literature. Thus it was that Josiah ordained a Paschal sacrifice to be celebrated in Jerusalem, thereby responding to the Deuteronomic requirement (2 Kings 23:21–23). This major change in the meaning of the Paschal sacrifice, originally a domestic offering to be celebrated in the vicinity of the home, has had major ramifications for Israelite-Jewish religion, wherein measures were adopted to preserve something of the local domestic character of this occasion in the face of the predominant emphasis on the temple cult.

Numbers 28–29 follow Leviticus 23 in acknowledging only two pilgrimage festivals, *Pesaḥ-Maṣṣôt,* in the spring, and *Sukkôt,* in the autumn of the year, which, in actuality, was the principal pilgrimage festival in Second Temple times, as it had always been, in fact. The final harvests were in, and Israelites were free to travel. Numbers 29:12–39 prescribe a highly detailed regimen of sacrifices for each of the eight days of the Sukkoth festival. Deuteronomy 16 had designated all three annual festivals as *ḥag,* and had deferred the second of them, appropriately named *šābûʿōt,* for seven weeks. The original reason for the deferral is fairly obvious: Undertaking a long pilgrimage to the central Temple during the *Pesaḥ-Maṣṣôt* festival would bring hardship at the very time the grain harvest was in full swing. Ironically, both Leviticus 23 of the Holiness Code, operating on a Sabbatarian calendar, and Numbers 28–29, reversing the Sabbatarian trend of the Holiness Code, "demote" the Pentecost, and no longer refer to it as *ḥag,* although they both endorsed the original Deuteronomic deferral of seven weeks, which survived in later Jewish tradition. Symbolically, later Jewish liturgy reinstated the Pentecost as a *ḥag.*

Numbers 28–29 follow Leviticus 23, and other priestly legislation, in prohibiting *melāʾkāh* "assigned tasks" on the principal days of the festivals, which are designated *qerōʾ miqrāʾ* "sanctuary convocation." Most likely, the concept of such sacred convocations derived from the Deuteronomic practice of *ʿaṣeret* "sacred assembly," a feature of religious life in temple cities, like Jerusalem. This derivation is suggested by the diction of First Isaiah, who speaks of "the proclamation of assemblies" (*qerōʾ miqrāʾ*—Isa 1:13), and even refers to those areas on Mount Zion that were set aside for such celebrations as *miqrāʾîm* (Isa

4:5). The institution *qerō' miqrā'* was an alternative mechanism for assembling Israelite communities; not necessarily for the purpose of sacrifice, but for celebrations of other kinds.

Before the advent of the Sukkoth festival, which began in the middle of the seventh month, Numbers 29:1–11 ordain two holy days, the New Moon of the seventh month, a day of blasting the ram's horn, followed on the tenth of the seventh month by a day of self-affliction. The narrow agenda of Numbers 28–29, which focuses on the public sacrificial regimen, is nowhere more obvious than here, where very little is said about the significance of these two occasions. Presumably, this New Moon had special importance because it preceded the harvest pilgrimage festival, and the same schedule also accounts for the need to purify the Temple before the pilgrimage. It is striking, nevertheless, that nothing of the purificatory regimen ordained in Leviticus 16 for the tenth day of the seventh month is mentioned in Numbers 29, except that Israelites must afflict themselves on this day.

In conclusion, it can be said that Number 28–29 present Jewish religion of the Persian Period primarily as a temple cult, in which fixed sacrifices of small and large animals, grain offerings and wine libations combined to serve as the principal forms of worship, on a daily basis and on special occasions. The unique Temple of Jerusalem is the central institution of Judaism, and the sacrificial cult, with its attendant purification rites, is its foremost expression. And so it was in the Persian Period, both as regards the Jewish communities within the Land of Israel and those outside of it, in the Diaspora. As if to anticipate the content of Numbers 30, Numbers 29 concludes with the command that Israelites should perform all of the above rites, in addition to their private offerings and vows.

b. The Votive System. Shifting from public to private religion, Numbers 30:2–17 set forth a code of practice governing vows, which are virtually always the acts of individuals and their families, undertaken on their own initiative. It was customary to pronounce vows as well as to fulfill them at sacred sites, especially on the occasion of pilgrimages. This explains why the provisions of Numbers 30:2–17 were appended to the calendar of the public cult. The system of vows is very ancient in biblical Israel, and has been studied in great depth. In the commentary on Numbers 30:2–17 the background of the present code of law will be discussed in considerable detail. What needs to concern us here is the *Sitz-im-Leben* of this particular code of law, which is focused primarily on vows made by daughters and wives, and which reflects innovative legislation.

Fortunately, the legal vocabulary of Numbers 30:2–17 is sufficiently precise to allow for the approximate dating of this text. The key term of reference is *'esār* (also written *'issār*), plural *'esarim* "binding agreement(s)," an Aramaic term attested in fourth century B.C.E. Aramaic papyri from Achaemenid Egypt, and from Samaria. The latter documents were discovered in Wadi ed-Daliyeh, not far from Jericho. These papyri record slave sales and other transactions, and use the term *ʾesār* to connote mutual agreements entered into voluntarily, and which then became binding. In the sense of "edict" this term also occurs in the Book of Daniel, and in later sources. Against the background of earlier biblical references to the vow (Hebrew *neder*), what is most novel about the legislation of Numbers 30:2–17 is the pairing of the *ʾesār*, usually realized as a written document, within a preeminently oral or verbal legal act, the pronouncement of a vow. This situation is further complicated by the manner prescribed for entering into a binding agreement, that of taking an oath. We emerge, therefore, with a mixed process, allowing of several options: One may either pronounce a vow in the usual way, or take an oath to enter into a written agreement, which is a new way of making a sacred donation. In the second instance, the primacy of orality is preserved by requiring a preliminary oath to sanction the binding agreement, which is then written.

It is also noteworthy that the provisions of Numbers 30:2–17 restrict the traditional rights of women as regards the validity of their vows and oaths. In no other biblical source do we read of the right of husbands and fathers to disallow the vows and oaths of their wives and daughters, respectively. Women continued to have the authority to make vows without the prior consent of their fathers or husband, but henceforth, these were to be subject to the approval of their fathers or husbands, as the situation dictated. It must be remembered that, traditionally, women were restricted in their right to own property and to assume legal obligations. The result was that their fathers and husbands were responsible for making good on the financial commitments undertaken by their daughters and wives. In principle, this might entitle men to have final approval over the commitments of their daughters and wives, although nothing of the sort is stated elsewhere. It is uncertain what specific realities account for the present restriction. It would be logical to suppose that if women had gained a degree of legal independence during the Achaemenid Period, they would have caused greater concern among the male population for this reason. The provisions of Numbers 30:2–17 may represent, therefore, a reaction against women's freedom, aimed at maintaining the subservience of women to their fathers and husbands in matters affecting the disposition of wealth and property.

Donations to the temple and priesthood, such as those provided for in Leviticus 25 and 27, could be handled by means of *šebūʿat ʾissār*, namely, an oath to enter into a written, binding agreement (for the specific term, see Notes to Num 30:14). In the Achaemenid society of Jerusalem and Judea, wherein the Temple of Jerusalem served as the focal institution not only in religious life but with respect to relations with the Persian authorities, support for the Temple and priesthood assumed great importance. A new legal instrument would have been needed to deal with this increased financial activity.

Later Jewish tradition shows concern for the legal validity of vows, and for the rights of women in this regard. Special emphasis was placed on oaths and vows of "self-affliction" (le ʿannōt nepeš—Num 30:14), with many examples of relevant situations provided in the Mishnah, *Nedārîm*, Chapter 11. Most of the examples are behavioral, and motivated by hostility, including vows and oaths not to experience sexual pleasure from their mates. Such aggressive avowals may have often triggered divorce proceedings, affording women greater maneuverability under a legal system that otherwise denied them the freedom to initiate divorce.

c. **Laws Relating to Homicide.** Numbers 35 takes up three related subjects: laws governing homicide, the Towns of Asylum, so-called, and the Levitical towns. What unites these subjects textually is the role of the clan relative known as *gōʾēl haddām* "the restorer of the blood." It is he who prompts those who have killed to find refuge in the Towns of Asylum, which, in turn, were located in some of the Levitical towns. The overriding principle is that of the blood debit, the notion that when one human being causes the death of another, whether intentionally or not, an imbalance is created; there is blood that is unaccounted for. The clan relatives of the victim were duty-bound to avenge the blood that had been shed, to retrieve it so that this imbalance could be redressed. To prevent unwarranted retaliation, special zones were demarcated where the homicide could flee, and where he would be accepted. In itself, the institution of asylum is very ancient; it is addressed in the Book of Covenant, the earliest collection of laws in the Torah, and referred to in fairly early biblical narratives. All of this information will be presented in the Introduction, Notes, and Comments to Numbers 35.

The contextual discussion of Numbers 35 begins with the observation of A. Rofé (1986) that the designation of certain towns as places of asylum, of which we first learn in Deuteronomy 19:1–13, was a response to the Deuteronomic doctrine, expounded primarily in Deuteronomy 12–16, that sacred space where sacrificial offerings can be brought is restricted to one, central temple. Since the concept of asylum is an expression of sacred space, based on the notion that once inside sacred space a person is under the protection of the deity, the desacralizing of existing cult sites, as ordained in Deuteronomy, would have made asylum very difficult for fugitives from clan retaliation. As a result, accessible zones were distributed throughout the land, eventually on both sides of the Jordan, so as to afford fugitives access to their protection. This means, in historical terms, that the entire complex of traditions in Numbers 35 and in Joshua 20, for instance, establishing what were by definition secular zones of refuge, must postdate the promulgation of Deuteronomy in the mid-to-late seventh century B.C.E. Their placement among the forty-eight Levitical cities reflects their cultic matrix, because temples and other cult sites had been located in these towns in earlier times. Having lost their sacral status, these towns were, nevertheless, still suitable for the asylum function.

The design of these towns, as set forth in Numbers 35:1–10, with their *migrāšîm* "town plots" surrounding them, is well known from the later chapters of Ezekiel, from Leviticus 25 and from other overtly postexilic literature. Although schematic in dimension, the towns depicted in Numbers 35 are based on a realistic plan: The town was in the center, with garden plots all around. The Notes and Comments to Numbers 35 survey what is known of the Towns of Asylum in biblical literature and discuss social welfare policies pertaining to the housing and employment of fugitives in special quarters of these towns.

Numbers 35 goes into considerable detail in differentiating between premeditated murder and what we might term manslaughter, making it clear that there is no asylum for one convicted of premeditated murder, and there can be no ransom, either. The fugitive would be safe in the Town of Asylum until brought to trial, but could never buy himself out of confinement. If it was determined that he was not guilty of premeditated murder, he would have to remain in the town of asylum until the death of the incumbent High Priest, at which time an amnesty would be proclaimed. This provision, in itself, expresses the priestly cast of the laws of homicide and asylum in Numbers 35. By following the prescribed laws, the debit of blood would be replenished. The pattern of asylum zones, west and east of the Jordan, would suit the Jewish demography of the Achaemenid Period.

Another interesting feature of the laws of Numbers 35, pointing to the realities of the postexilic Achaemenid Period, is the role assigned to the *ʿēdāh*, a distinctly priestly term of reference, in adjudicating cases of homicide. The *ʿēdāh* is known to have existed in the Jewish mercenary community of Elephantine throughout most of the fifth century B.C.E. Its functional meanings range from "community," namely, the entire Israelite society, to the local community as part of the larger network, to the representative, popular assembly acting for the community, which seems to be what is intended in Numbers 35.

d. The Map of Greater Canaan. Beginning in the census of Numbers 26, continuing through the incident of the daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 27, 36) and informing the unusual route of the Israelites from Egypt (Numbers 33) and the geographical delimitation of the land of Canaan (Numbers 34) is a persistent agenda: The point of this agenda is that a new generation of Israelites survived the wilderness march in goodly numbers, and reached the Plains of Moab by a continuous route. From that location they would be able to cross the Jordan into Canaan. This point is made, in the first instance, by the census of Numbers 26, which lists all of the twelve tribes and then the tribe of Levi separately, breaking the tribes down into *mišpāḥôt* "clans, sibs," with a generational progression covering the span of the Wilderness Period. An analysis of the onomasticon of the census shows that most of the attested names are late. The entire census project is under the supervision of Moses and Eleazar, the priest, and the *neśî’îm* "chieftains" of the tribes.

This census takes no overt account of the allocation of territories in Transjordan to the tribes of Reuben, Gad and part of the tribe of Manasseh. In fact, the census is recorded in a Reubenite list, recognizing Reuben as the firstborn, hardly conceivable if there was a perceived de facto problem with the Transjordanian settlement. After all, the census precedes Numbers 32. It does, however, belie an awareness of the Gileadite habitation of Machir, son of Manasseh, and also mentions the predicament of the Cisjordanian Manassites, the daughters of Zelophehad (Num 36:29–33). In other words, it is acknowledged implicitly that the tribe of Manasseh is the only one to occupy territory on both sides of the Jordan. This issue comes to fruition in Numbers 27 and 36, which project an unforeseen legal situation: A special dispensation granted a man's daughters the right to inherit his land if he had left no sons. This dispensation is then subject to a restriction, set forth in Numbers 36 as an addendum to the Book of Numbers, whereby daughters who actually inherited their father's land were required to marry men of their own tribe, thereby undoing the long term effects of the dispensation, itself. The hidden agenda of this cycle is to sanction the Manassites' right to a territory in Canaan proper, and it is noteworthy, in this connection, that most of the names of Zelophehad's daughters are actually toponyms in the district of Samaria (see Notes to Num 26:29–33). Numbers 34 prescribes the distribution of the Land of Canaan to ten tribes, including Manasseh, or, more precisely, to part of Manasseh; in the Deuteronomistic tradition, to half of it (Num 34:16–29). This orientation implies cognizance of the Transjordanian dispensation of the prior account, Numbers 32. One name in the list of tribal chieftains, which begins with Judah, is attested as Persian, namely Parnak, the father of Elizaphan, chieftain of Zebulun (Num 34:24; see Notes to Num 34:24).

The limits of the land of Canaan as delineated in Numbers 34 are a fascinating subject for study. They partially correspond to those recorded in Ezekiel 47:15–20, and to information on the limits of Joshua's conquests and "the remaining land" (Jos 13:2–6, Judg 3:1–3). Most informative is the correlation with Joshua 15:1–12, a delineation of the southern border of Judah. In fact, Joshua 15:1–4 may be the actual source of Numbers 34:2b–5, with what was the southern border of Judah now being presented as the southern border of Canaan. A. Alt's view (1953–1959) that Joshua 15 reflects realities of the reign of Josiah in the late seventh century B.C.E. has won wide acceptance, and it would be reasonable to date Numbers 34 later than that period, as would certainly be true of Ezekiel 47. There are further correlations with Joshua 13 and Ezekiel 47 pertaining to their delineations of the northern border of Canaan, which reached north of Byblos, thereby including Phoenicia within Canaan. The upshot is that the limits of the Land of Canaan presented in Numbers 34 reflect perceptions otherwise known from the exilic and postexilic periods (Map 4: "Greater Canaan").

And yet it is also true that the vision of a larger Land of Israel that informs Numbers 34 mirrors the extent of the Egyptian province of Canaan (or the sphere of Egyptian hegemony) after the battle of Kadesh on the Orontes against the Hittites ca. 1270 B.C.E. In fact Riblah, here mentioned as being on the eastern border of Canaan, and elsewhere known in biblical literature only from the last days of the kingdom of Judah (2 Kings 23:33, 25:6, 20–21, Jer 39:5–6, 52:9–10, 26–27), is probably the very site of the Egyptian-Hittite standoff. In such terms, Numbers 34 would be refracting a vision of Canaan that was realistic before the invasions of the Sea Peoples, but after the Egyptian defeat at Kadesh. This may indicate that priestly writers of the Achamenid Period found meaning in the idea that the God of Israel had granted his people all of the land that had formerly been held by the Egyptians, making them the successors of those earlier rulers of Canaan. This would give them the right to extend their control over larger parts of the Achaemenid province of *ʿAbār Naharāh,* over which Solomon was said to have ruled (1 Kings 5:4).

e. How the Israelites Got to the Plains of Moab and Their Encounters on the Way. Numbers 33 records a forty-year route of march, beginning in northeastern Egypt and reaching to the Plains of Moab. What is singular about this route is its course from Kadesh to the Plains of Moab, because it charts the Israelite march northward through Edom, traversing Punon, a known site, and onward through Dibon-Gad, anachronistic in context, but realistic in expressing later Gadite rule in North Moab. This route comes in place of one that had the Israelites circumvent these lands, as is projected in both the JE and other priestly historiographies, notwithstanding their disagreements with each other. Numbers 33:40 also mentions the Israelite incursion into the Negeb reported in Numbers 21:1–3. We are unable to determine whether this alternative route has an historical basis, just as problems remain with the more widely attested route east of Edom and Moab (Map 2).

These two different routes are hardly reconcilable, and are probably to be attributed to different priestly traditions. Specifically, it is possible that the projected route through Edom and Moab is also envisioned in Deuteronomy 2, which is the work of the Deuteronomist. Another aspect of Deuteronomistic influence may be seen in the fact that Numbers 33, as distinct from the priestly tradition in general, does not have the Israelites wander in Sinai for thirty-eight years before arriving at Kadesh, but, in synch with Deuteronomy 2:14, has them do their wandering after leaving Kadesh. It is just that instead of the JE route east of Edom and Moab, Numbers 33 sends the Israelites northward, up through these very countries, as already noted. Many of the listed toponyms are otherwise unattested. All in all, Numbers 33 leaves us somewhat confused, and suggests that for reasons unclear to us it was important for certain biblical writers to register either Israelite hegemony over Edom and Moab, which is more likely, or provide evidence of friendly relations with these peoples that would have made it possible for the Israelites to traverse their territories.

The concluding statement (Num 33:50–56) resonates Deuteronomy 12, in particular, in its stern admonition to the Israelites, once they entered their land, to drive out the Canaanite peoples and to resist any accommodation with their pagan practices. This resonance is especially noticeable in Numbers 33:52, which parallels Deuteronomy 12:2–3 in its thrust, although it employs alternative terms of reference. The verb common to both sources is *ʾibbēd* "to destroy"—all of the pagan cultic appurtenances, here including *bāmôt* "cult platforms," a term that never occurs in Deuteronomy, but is frequent in the redactional sections of Kings (1 Kings 22:44, 2 Kings 12:4, 14:4, 15:4, 35), and in the Moabite Stele (Gibson 1971:75, line 27). So it is that the projected forty-year route concludes with a rigorous, forward look at Israelite life in Canaan.

It is not clear exactly where the battle with the Midianites, projected in Numbers 31, took place. Its matrix is the account of the Baal Peor incident, at Abel-Shittim in the Plains of Moab, a theme amplified by priestly writers so as to involve the Midianites in hostilities that had originally involved only Moabites. In any event, the Midianite war is part of the agenda of the Book of Numbers, in general, and of the priestly writers, in particular. Finding no extant record of a war with the Midianites, whose actual battles with the Israelites of the premonarchic period are recounted in Judges 6–8, they projected a battle with Midian before the Israelites crossed the Jordan, getting it in "right under the line." This served to lay a foundation for the historical wars with the Midianites, just as the JE writers had done with respect to the Amalekites, Canaanites, and Ammon, Moab and Edom.

As insightfully explained by E. A. Knauf (1988, 1992), most, if not all of the names of the five kings of Midian who were slain by the Israelites are actually toponyms on an itinerary through North Arabia and Transjordan, most likely a Nabataean trade route that was in use during the Achaemenid period. The most obvious example is *Reqem*, Nabataean *Rqmw*, the ancient name of Petra, but there are others as well: Thus, *Ṣûr* may represent Khirbet Ḍor in North Arabia, and Ḥûr may represent the Nabataean site Haura, present day al-Humaymak. Finally, *Rebaʿ* is probably to be identified with Naqb Rubaʿi, located on an access route to Petra. These identifications are historical indicators, showing that what is projected as a battle with ancient Midianites was written or compiled at a time when others, referred to as Midianites, may have been the actual enemies. There are indications that the memory of Israelite triumphs over the Midianites of the premonarchic period was very much alive in the postexilic period, as we would gather from references to those battles in several late biblical passages (Isa 60:6, Ps 83:9–12). The early victories over the Midianites served as a dramatic epitome of Israelite power in preexilic times, as well. Isaiah (9:3, 10:26) hoped for a victory over the Assyrians that would be glorious "like the day of Midian" *(keyôm Midyān)*.

Is it possible to identify the so-called Midianites of Numbers 31? Consider the following: (a) The names of their kings are actual Nabataean toponyms of the Achaemenid Period; (b) the verb *m-s-r* "to deploy," unique to this chapter in Torah literature, is an Aramaism; and (c) the unusual idiom *weyihyû ʿal Midyān* resonates with Aramaic *hawāh ʿal* "to do battle against, to attack." It would seem that we are squarely in the postexilic period. At that time, the best candidates for a legendary identification as Midianites were the Kedarite Arabs, most notably those who were ruled by Geshem the Arab *(Gešem hāʿarbî)* of Neh 2:19, 6:1–2), whose Arabic name actually appears in Nehemiah 6:6 as Gashmu *(Gašmu.)* I. Eph'al (1982) has clarified the history of these early Arabs, and, as explained in the Comments on Numbers 31, the name of Gashmu as king of Kedar is attested in a fifth century B.C.E. Aramaic inscription from Tell el-Maskhuta in northeastern Egypt, and there is other testimony to the historicity of this biblical figure. From what is known, the Kedarites were a powerful people who exercised control over areas to the south and east of Judah and westward toward Egypt. It is noteworthy that in Chronicles we find many references to contemporary Arabs, of various affiliations, making it reasonable to conclude that the author, or compiler, of Numbers 31 was thinking of contemporary Arabs, as well.

It is unnecessary to repeat here the discussion in the Comments on Numbers 31 regarding such issues as the division of spoils and rites of purification associated with warfare. It will suffice to react to the horrendous application of the *ḥērem* doctrine, rooted in Deuteronomy, that called for massive killing of the defeated population. The thematic association with Judges 21:1–12, a late passage in the Book of Judges, suggests that during parts of the Achaemenid Period animosity against neighboring peoples was intense. This reality may also serve to explain the similarly severe tone of the Jericho episode recounted in Joshua 6–7, and echoed in the narrative of the Gibeonite accommodation (Joshua 9), both of which are late biblical accounts with strong priestly overtones. The stark irony that Israelite fighters who had just engaged in the methodic slaying of women and male children, not to speak of enemy combatants, were being admonished to purify themselves ritually cannot be overlooked for what it tells us of the hierarchy of values that obtained among the priestly writers who gave us these texts. How different was their mentality from that of other priestly writers, those of Genesis, for instance, who most often depicted the Patriarchs as men who sought to live in peace with the Canaanites.

f. A Postscript to the Book of Numbers. Numbers concludes the Tetrateuch, the unit of four books that together present a traditional history of humankind since creation, and of Israel up to the point of entering the Land of Canaan, granted to it by its God. Deuteronomy, as its name conveys, represents an alternative version of part of that history, beginning after the Exodus and the Sinai/Horeb theophany, and bringing the Israelites through wildernesses to the Plains of Moab. It is thus that Numbers and Deuteronomy focus on the same essential time frame, the Wilderness Period, when Moses, and Aaron and his sons, set down the Israelite way of life. As most recently pointed out in very different ways by Mary Douglas (1993) and by S. David Sperling (1998), virtually everything in Torah literature is talking about something other than what it purports to be talking about! The main function of Torah literature, and of Numbers ever more so, is to lay the foundation for the life of the Israelite people in its land by defining "the self" in contrast to "the other," thereby differentiating between Israel and its enemies. The Book of Numbers completes the presentation of laws and commandments, rituals and festivals, sacrifices, purifications and vows, all of which, when taken together, comprise the religious way of life of the Israelite people. It is in this spirit that the content of Torah literature has been customarily termed "prehistory." The Torah contains historical information, to be sure, but its function is not primarily to record history, as such, but to present several overlapping versions of Israel's formative phase as a people.

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PART I.

NUMBERS 21: FROM KADESH TO THE PLAINS OF MOAB: ISRAEL IN TRANSJORDAN

◆

INTRODUCTION

Numbers 21 (more precisely, Num 21:1–22:1) is a crucial link in the historiographic chain of Torah literature. The composition of this chapter was discussed in the Introduction to the Book of Numbers (Levine 1993: 60–61). There it was observed that Numbers 21 preserves a highly compressed account of the Israelite march from the area of Kadesh Barnea all the way to the Plains of Moab. To judge from the progress of the march, the end of the Exodus generation would have come in the text between verses 12 and 13 of Numbers 21. There is, however, no reference to this critical juncture in the chapter as we have it. Verse 12 records the arrival of the Israelites at Zered Gorge (Wadi el-Hesa), an event that, according to Deuteronomic historiography (Deut 2:13–15), occurred thirty-eight years after the Israelites had left Kadesh Barnea. The same schedule informs the route detailed in Numbers 33, an itinerary that reflects the priestly view of the Wilderness Period. In the priestly schedule, the Israelites arrived at the southern Moabite border, at nearby Iyye-Abarim (Num 33:44), just before beginning their northward march toward the Plains of Moab.

Without a backward glance, Numbers 21 proceeds to the next phase of the journey in verse 13, carrying the march to the Arnon river (Wadi Mujib), on the northern border of Moab. As the biblical chronicler saw it, this is where Amorite territory began, and it is precisely at this point that Numbers 21 begins to sound an heroic note, punctuated by ancient poetic excerpts (Map 1). The new generation of Israelites were victorious over the Amorites. Questions raised by the compressed composition of Numbers 21 will be discussed in the Comments, as will the complex geographic and historical problems relating to the archeological history of Transjordan. It will also be important to identify the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the biblical historiographers who gave us Numbers 21 in its received form. The contents of Numbers 21 may be outlined as follows:

1) Numbers 21:1–3—An account of a battle against the Canaanite king of Arad at Hormah, fought in an attempt to penetrate Canaan from Kadesh. This account probably represents an alternative version of the Israelite defeat at Hormah recorded in Numbers 14:44–45, and it may actually incorporate more than one record. As a result, Numbers 21:1–3 has taken on a Deuteronomic tone: The tide of battle is said to have turned in Israel's favor after the people solemnly pledged to proscribe the Canaanite towns as *ḥērem*. The report of the battle at Hormah may have been inserted here by priestly writers, since the same occasion is mentioned later on in Num 33:40, within a priestly review of the Israelite march.
2) Numbers 21:4–11 (JE, except for Num 21:4, a priestly interpolation)—

The Israelite march from Hor Hahar to Iyye-Abarim, in the desert east of Moab, and events occurring along the way. The people were disgruntled over lack of water and complained about the manna. In anger, YHWH sent forth poisonous snakes who bit the people, causing many deaths. After an admission of guilt by the Israelites, Moses entreated YHWH on their behalf. YHWH thereupon instructed him to fashion a copper serpent and place it atop a standard. All who gazed upon it would be cured of snakebite.

3) Numbers 21:12–20 (JE, along with poetic citations)—The march proceeded via Oboth and Iyye-Abarim to Zered Gorge. From Zered Gorge the Israelite march continued to a summit overlooking the Arnon river to the east, and the wilderness to the west. Two poetic excerpts appear in this section of Numbers 21: The first (Num 21:14–15), cited from the Chronicle of the Wars of YHWH, confirms the Israelite presence along the northern Moabite border at the Arnon, and the second (Num 21:17b–18a) confirms their presence at Beer, a nearby site, where a famous well had been dug.
4) Numbers 21:21–22:1 (JE, along with a poetic citation)—The Israelite victories over the Amorites of central Transjordan and the Bashan to the north. The Amorite king, Sihon, whose capital was in Heshbon, refused the Israelites passage through his territory, at which point the Israelites, having no alternative route of access to the Jordan, did battle with the Amorites at Jahaz, north of the Arnon. The Israelites conquered the entire territory of Sihon, from the Arnon to the Jabbok, and up to the fortified Ammonite border. They settled all of the Amorite towns, including Heshbon and its dependencies.

The account then focuses on Heshbon and the former territory of Moab, reviewing past history. Sihon had defeated the first king of Moab, conquering his land down to Medeba and Dibon. This prior defeat of the Moabites is confirmed for the JE historiographers by a ballad (Num 21:27–30) celebrating Heshbon as Sihon's capital. Numbers 21:32 records the Israelite reconaissance of Jazer, near the Ammonite border, and its subsequent capture, and the deportation of its Amorite inhabitants. The chapter concludes with the Israelite conquest of the Bashan, and the defeat of its king, named Og, at Edrei. The Israelites were now poised to cross the Jordan, and Numbers 22:1, which actually concludes this textual unit, reports on their arrival at the Plains of Moab.

TRANSLATION

21 [1]The Canaanite, the king of Arad, resident of the Negeb, heard that the Israelites were approaching by the Atharim road. He did battle with Israel, and took some of him captive.

[2]Israel then vowed a vow to YHWH, and said: "If you deliver this people into my power, I shall proscribe their towns as *herem*."

[3]YHWH acceded to the wishes of Israel and delivered the Canaanites. They, together with their towns, were proscribed as *ḥērem*, and that site was [accordingly] named Hormah.

[4]They marched *from Mount Hor* by way of the Sea of Reeds, so as to circumvent the land of Edom. The mood of the people became impatient on the way.

[5]The people spoke out against God and against Moses: "Why did you make us leave Egypt only to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our inwards loathe this putrid bread!"

[6]Thereupon, YHWH dispatched *sarap*-serpents against the people, and they bit the people so that a multitude of Israelites died.

[7]The people approached Moses and declared: "We have indeed been disloyal in speaking against YHWH and against you. Petition YHWH to remove the serpents from us." So, Moses made petition on behalf of the people.

[8]YHWH then instructed Moses: Fashion a *sarap*-serpent and place it atop a standard. So will it be that when anyone who is bitten gazes upon it, he will survive.

[9]Accordingly, Moses fashioned a serpent of bronze, and placed it atop a standard. So it was, that if a serpent had bitten a person, he would look at the bronze serpent and survive.

[10]The Israelites set out on the march, and encamped at Oboth.

[11]From Oboth they marched on, encamping at Iyye-Abarim in the wilderness, facing Moab from the rising of the sun.

[12]From there, they continued on their march, encamping at Zered Gorge.

[13]They continued their march from that point, encamping across the Arnon, in the wilderness extending from the territory of the Amorites. For the Arnon represents the boundary of Moab, dividing Moab from the territory of the Amorites.

[14]On this very matter was it stated in the Chronicle of the Wars of YHWH:

אֶת־וָהֵב בְּסוּפָה וְאֶת־הַנְּחָלִים,
אַרְנוֹן וְאֶשֶׁד הַנְּחָלִים.
אֲשֶׁר נָטָה לְשֶׁבֶת עָר, וְנִשְׁעַן לִגְבוּל מוֹאָב.

At Waheb in Suphah, and at the wadis;
[At] the Arnon [15]and the cataract of the wadis.
Where it bends to the settlement of Ar, and leans toward the boundary
of Moab.

[16]From that point to Beer, the very spring where YHWH had instructed Moses: Assemble the people and I will provide them with water.

[17]It was then that Israel sang this song:

“עֲלִי בְאֵר!” *עֱנוּ* לָהּ.
בְּאֵר חֲפָרוּהָ שָׂרִים, כָּרוּהָ נְדִיבֵי הָעָם.
בִּמְחֹקְקֵ*[ם]* כְּמִשְׁעֲנֹתָם.

“Surge, oh well!”—*they sang* to it.
[18a]Oh well that the commanders delved, that the knights of the fighting force dug;
Along with magistrate[s], bearing their scepters.

[18b–19]From the desert to Mattanah, and from Mattanah to Nahliel, and from Nahliel to Bamoth.

[20]And from Bamoth to the valley located in the open country of Moab, to the peak of the summit overlooking the wasteland.

[21]The Israelites then dispatched messengers to Sihon, the king of the Amorites, with the following message:

[22]“I wish to traverse your land. We will not turn aside to enter any field or vineyard, nor will we drink well water. We will keep to the King’s Highway until we have traversed your territory.”

[23]But Sihon would not permit the Israelites to traverse his territory, and mustered his entire force. He set out into the wilderness to do battle with the Israelites. He arrived at Jahaz, and did battle with the Israelites.

[24]The Israelites slew his forces by the blade of the sword, and took possession of his land, from the Arnon to the Jabbok, up to [the border] of the Ammonites; for the border of the Ammonites was strongly fortified.

[25]The Israelites captured all of these towns. The Israelites settled in all of the Amorite towns, including Heshbon and all its dependencies.

[26]For Heshbon was the capital of Sihon, the king of the Amorites. He had fought against the earlier Moabite king and seized all of his land from his jurisdiction, up to the Arnon.

[27a]It is regarding this that the composers of *mešālîm* recited:

בֹּאוּ חֶשְׁבּוֹן תִּבָּנֶה, וְתִכּוֹנֵן עִיר סִיחֹן.
כִּי־אֵשׁ יָצְאָה מֵחֶשְׁבּוֹן, לֶהָבָה מִקִּרְיַת סִיחֹן.
אָכְלָה עָר מוֹאָב, *בָּמוֹת־בַּעַל* אַרְנֹן.
אוֹי־לְךָ מוֹאָב! אָבַדְתָּ עַם־כְּמוֹשׁ!
נָתַן בָּנָיו פְּלֵיטִם, וּבְנֹתָיו בַּשְּׁבִית,
[לְמֶלֶךְ אֱמֹרִי סִיחוֹן]
וְנִינָם אָבַד חֶשְׁבּוֹן עַד־דִּיבוֹן,
וְנָשְׁמ*[וּ]* עַד־נֹפַח, אֲשֶׁר עַד־מֵידְבָא.

[27b]Come to Heshbon; how it is fortified! How firmly founded is Sihon's
town!
[28]For fire blazed from Heshbon, flame from Sihon's capital;
It consumed Ar of Moab, *Bamoth-Baal-on-Arnon.*
[29]Woe unto you, Moab! You have vanished, people of Kemosh!
His sons were delivered as fugitives, his daughters into captivity.
To the Amorite king, Sihon.
[30]*Their posterity* has vanished, from Heshbon all the way to Dibon;
They are devastated down to Nophah, located near Medeba.
[31]The Israelites settled in the land of the Amorites.

[32]Then Moses dispatched [men] to scout Jazer, and they captured its dependencies, dispossessing the Amorites who had been there.

[33]Then they turned northward by way of the Bashan. Og, the king of the Bashan, came out to face them, he and his entire force, to do battle at Edrei.

[34]YHWH said to Moses: Have no fear of him, for I will deliver him into your power; him and his entire force and his entire land. You will do to him just as you did to Sihon, the king of the Amorites, who ruled in Heshbon.

[35]They slew him and his sons and his entire force, until no survivor was left to him, and they took possession of his land.

22 [1]The Israelites marched on, and encamped in the Plains of Moab, across the Jordan from Jericho.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 21:1–3: TURNING A NEGEB RETREAT INTO VICTORY

1. The problem raised by the placement of Numbers 21:1–3 was discussed in the Introduction to the Book of Numbers (Num 1–20, 60–61), and has been pointed out again in the Introduction to Numbers 21. The JE historiography of Numbers 13–14 and 20:14–21 has consistently propelled the Israelites toward the Red Sea and Transjordan, predicating all along their inability to penetrate Canaan directly for one reason or another. It is therefore startling to find at the beginning of Numbers 21 an alternate version of Numbers 14:44–45, reworked so as to attribute success to an Israelite penetration of the Negeb. Not only do Numbers 21:1–3 effectively contradict Numbers 14:44–45, but they fly in the face of the Transjordanian expedition. In the Comments to

Numbers 21, the historical as well as the editorial problems associated with this brief account will be discussed further.

The designations that identify the unnamed local king of Arad are unusual. In no other instance of biblical usage is the determined gentilic, *hakkenaʿanî*, applied to an individual. In every case it refers to the group by that name (cf. Gen 12:6, Num 14:25, 43, 45). Participial *yôšēb* often means "resident," or collectively "inhabitants," especially in genitive constructions. Thus, we find *yôšēb hāʾāreṣ hakkenaʿanî*, "The Canaanite inhabitants of the land" (Gen 50:11; cf. Num 14:14). At times the verb *y-š-b* may have the functional sense of ruling a territory or town, of occupying the "seat" of power.

Archaeologists have disagreed on the identification of both Arad and Hormah as represented in this account. Evidence of urban settlement in the western Negeb is lacking for the late thirteenth or early twelfth centuries B.C.E., when the battle here recorded between the Israelites and the Canaanites would have occurred. In the Comments to Numbers 21, it will be suggested that we have in Numbers 21:1–3 a composite account, representing yet another probable instance of historiographic refraction. A later writer retrojected the reality of the town of Arad, as he knew it in his own time, into an account of the Israelite conquest, dated by biblical historiographers to an earlier period. If, however, Hormah were to be located in the eastern Negeb rather than in the western Negeb near Arad, the account of a battle at that site in the early Iron Age may have had an historical basis.

by the Atharim road.

See Aharoni 1993:45–46, maps 48, 50 for this unique geographical reference. The ancient tradition, preserved in the Targum, that Masoretic *derek hāʾatārîm* means "the road of the spies," Hebrew *hattārîm*, from the root *t-w-r*, is questionable (Gray-*ICC*:274). It is more likely that this toponym expresses Aramaistic *ʾatār* "place, way," hence "the way of the trails," or the like. And yet, the spies sent out from Kadesh would have most likely traversed the same or a similar route into the Negeb hill country. See Notes to Numbers 13:17, 22–23; Levine 1993: 366–367.

2. *Israel then vowed a vow to YHWH.* Most often, vows were pronounced by individuals, and even where a plural verb is used on rare occasions, the antecedents are individuals who pledged or fulfilled their vows (Isa 19:21, Jonah 1:16). Here, a singular verb is used collectively, which is notably unusual, to refer to the Israelite people. The initial verb, *wayyiddar*, is followed by *yayyōʾmar*, also in the singular. On the *neder* formula, see Berlinerblau (1991:548–555). The protasis of the votive formula projects a contingency, expressed by conditional *ʾim* + a second person, imperfect verbal form: *ʾim tittēn* "If you will deliver." The apodosis specifies what the person pronouncing the vow will do in return, a relationship known in Greek as *dô ut dês*, "I give in order that you may give."

"I shall proscribe their towns as ḥērem."

The Hiphil *heḥerîm,* "to proscribe," has a wide range of functional meanings, ranging from total destruction and the slaying of the population, in part or totally, to the deportation of local inhabitants and/or the cultic devotion of the spoils of war. Numbers 21:3 joins the *neder* to the practice of the *ḥērem,* thereby producing a vow of proscription. Of immediate concern is the significance of diction for the source-critical assignment of Numbers 21:1–3. Use of the verb *heḥerîm,* when said of 'towns' (ʿārîm), turns our attention to Deuteronomy (2:34, 3:6, 7:2, 13:16, 20:17), and to other sources that resonate with Deuteronomic diction in similar descriptions. These include passages such as Joshua 8:26–27, 10:28, 35, 37, 39, 11:12, 20–21, 17:20. It could be argued, therefore, that Numbers 21:3 was taken, at least in part, from a record of Deuteronomic provenence, interpolated here by a priestly redactor. It is also possible that such diction points to the Elohist as the composer of Numbers 21:1–3.

Numbers 21:1–3 thus surprise the reader by recording a successful Israelite incursion into the Negeb. Numbers 21:3 plays on the name Hormah, having the effect of reversing its significance. In Numbers 14:44–45, the name Hormah (literally "proscription, destruction") referred to the routing of the Israelites by the Canaanites, whereas here it refers to the destruction of Arad, Hormah and other Canaanite towns in the Negeb by the Israelites. It should not go unnoticed that Numbers 21:2–3 expand the scope of the Israelite victory incrementally. We began with mention of one town, Arad, but the formulation of the vow proceeds to speak of "their towns" (*ʿārêhem*).

3. The obedience formula *šāmaʿ beqôl* "to heed the voice" has recently been discussed by Levine (1993). Not only is the precise formulation of the present verse quite rare in biblical literature, but also the fact that YHWH specifically heeds the voice of the supplicant. Nevertheless, see 1 Kings 17:22, where YHWH accedes to Elijah's entreaty and revives a child, with *ʾelōhîm* instead of YHWH as the syntactic subject (cf. Judges 13:9, where God, manifested as an angel, agrees to appear a second time to Manoah and his wife). The phenomenology of Numbers 21:1–3 is, therefore, mixed. Verse 2 projects the give-and-take of a votive negotiation, whereas in verse 3 God responds to a petition.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 21:4–11: ADVENTURES EN ROUTE: THE BRONZE SERPENT

4. *They marched from Mount Hor by way of the Sea of Reeds.* It has already been noted in the Introduction to Numbers (Num 1–20, 61) that the present

verse may contain a priestly interpolation, namely, the Hebrew *mehōr hāhār* "from Mount Hor," a toponym unidentified, in any event (see Notes to Num 20:22–23; Levine 1993:495). As Gray (Gray-*ICC*:274) suggests, the present verse may have immediately followed Numbers 20:21 in the JE narrative:

> {Num 20:21}: But Edom refused to allow Israel to traverse his territory, and Israel turned away from him.
>
> {Num 21:4}: So they marched >from Mount Hor< by way of the Red Sea, in order to circumvent the land of Edom.

On the meaning of *yam sûp* "the Sea of Reeds," namely, the Red Sea, see Notes to Numbers 14:25; Levine 1993:368. There the initial command to march to the region of the Red Sea is recorded by referring to *derek yam sûp* "the way to the Reed Sea" (also cf. Deut 1:40, 2:1). The present verse thus records the fulfillment of Numbers 14:25, and the direct consequence of Numbers 20:14–21, where we were told that the king of Edom refused the Israelites passage through his land. Exodus 13:18 records the initial command by God, directing the people to follow "the desert route to the Sea of Reeds" (*derek hammidbār yam sûp*). It is reasonable to regard that statement as referring to the Red Sea, in the Gulf of Eilat-Aqaba; it anticipates the route subsequently taken, the one recorded in Numbers 14:25, 21:4 (so Gray-*ICC*:160). It is hardly worthwhile to keep searching for and speculating about another body of water by the same name located somewhere in northern Sinai, one that would have been encountered by the Israelites very soon after leaving Egypt. In Exodus 13, pursuit of a route through eastern Transjordan from the Gulf of Elath-Aqaba represented an alternative to continuing along the Via Maris, called "the way of the land of the Philistines" in Exodus 13:16. In Numbers (14:25, 21:4) the Red Sea route represented an alternative to Israelite incursions into the Negeb from Kadesh. Taken cumulatively, the JE traditions of Exodus and Numbers rationalize the ultimate pursuit of the Transjordanian route by emphasizing the incapacity of the Israelites, for reasons both realistic and ideological, to penetrate Canaan directly.

The mood of the people became impatient on the way

Idiomatic *qāṣar nepeš* "the mood became impatient" recalls *qōṣẹr rûaḥ* "shortness of breath, impatience" in Exodus 6:9 (cf. Prov 14:17).

5. *The people spoke out against God and against Moses.* Idiomatic *dibbēr b-* "to speak against" recalls Numbers 12:1: *wattedabbēr Miryām we-'Aharôn be-Mōšeh* "Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses" (cf. Num 12:8, and see Notes to Num 12:1; Levine 1993:328). The sense suggests rebellion. Similar complaints, even in similar language, are voiced in Numbers 16:13–14 by Dathan and Abiram when opposing Moses' leadership. An even more precise comparison is found in Exodus 17:3, where the people likewise complained about the

lack of water, and where Moses also acted as an intercessor. There is the difference that according to Exodus 17 God was disposed to providing water and consequently taught Moses how to produce it. Here, God is entirely punitive in response to the complaints of the people, unleashing poisonous snakes against them. Against this background, the priestly reworking of Exodus 17:1b–17 in Numbers 20:1–13 might be taken to reflect of the divine relationship with Israel (see the Introduction to Numbers 20; Levine 1993:484).

"and our inwards loathe this putrid bread!"

The Hebrew verb *qûṣ* "to loathe," may take an indirect object with beth as here (cf. Lev 20:23, 1 Kings 11:25), or one may be said to be "in disgust because of-" (*qāṣ mippenê-* Exod 1:12, Num 22:3, Isa 7:18). We even have a double object, as in Genesis 27:46: "I loathe my life because of (*qaṣtî beḥayyay mippenê*) the daughters of Heth." Except for Proverbs 3:11, speaking in an applied sense so as to instruct one not to detest moral rebuke, all other references pertain to the actual dislike of other people, to the dislike of the land, or to detesting evil deeds. Curiously, here is the only instance where one's inwards (or appetite), conveyed by the word *nepeš*, are viscerally disgusted by or with food! The reduplicative form, *qelōqēl*, derives from *q-l-l* "to be light, swift, of lesser importance, or quality," hence: "despised" (*HALAT* 1030–1033, s.v. *q-l-l*, 1034, s.v. *qelōqēl*). This semantic range would allow for the meaning "spoiled, rotten," which seems appropriate in the present verse. Perhaps reference is to the spoilage of the manna left ungathered each morning, as reported in Exodus 16:19–20 (see Notes to Num 11:6; Levine 1993:322, and Comments to Num 10:29–12:16; Levine 1993:337–338).

6. *Thereupon, YHWH dispatched* śārāp-*serpents against the people.* The Piel, *šillaḥ*, means "to dispatch, release," and is applied to both humans and to animals and fowl (Exod 22:4, Lev 14:7, 53, 16:21–22). The meaning of Hebrew *śārāp* remains uncertain. In Deuteronomy 8:15, it is listed alongside *nāḥāš* "snake," and *ʿaqrāb* "scorpion," whereas in Isaiah 6:6, 14:29, 30:6 we read of a flying creature. There is also the problem suggested by Isaiah 6:2 where context identifies the Seraphim as celestial beings who heralded the entry of YHWH into his throne room and who fly, as indicated by Isaiah 6:6. It is likewise unclear whether "burning" connotes a poisonous effect, as has been suggested, seeing that in all of its occurrences in the Hebrew Bible the verb *ś-r-p* refers to the effects of fire. Could the *śārāp* be a fire-spewing dragon? And yet, the text states that these creatures bit (the verb *n-s-k*) the people, and that they were real, and fatally poisonous, not mythological. It is likely, therefore, that the burning refers to the inflammation resulting from snakebite (see Gray-ICC:278).

so that a multitude of Israelites died

The Hebrew *ʿam rāb* usually characterizes a large nation or fighting force (Judg 5:11, 1 Kings 3:8, Joel 2:2), but is here used more loosely to indicate a multitude of people (Jos 17:15, 17). In contrast, the mention of Og's *ʿām* in Numbers 21:35, below, is probably more technical, and refers to his fighting force.

7. Earlier, in verse 5, the people had spoken against Moses and God. Here, the biblical writer implicitly attributes to the penitent Israelites the awareness that in rebelling against Moses they had also acted against God himself. On the meaning of the verb *hitpallēl* "to pray, entreat," see Notes to Numbers 11:2; Levine 1993:320. The people ask that "the snake" (*hannāḥāš*), in the collective sense, be removed from their midst.

8–9. *Fashion a* sarap-*serpent and place it atop a standard.* The meaning of Hebrew *nēs* "standard, column" is established by any number of biblical statements that speak of "raising up" (the verb *n-s-'*) the *nes* (Isa 5:26, 11:12, 13:2, 18:3, Jer 4:6), and of seeing it from afar (Jer 4:21). Most likely, the term *nehoset* in the Hebrew Bible refers to bronze composed of copper with ten percent tin content. In biblical times, copper reserves were concentrated in the Edomite mountains, north of Punon and south of Timna (Abramsky 1968: 644–656). The iconographic background of the tale of the bronze serpent, as well as the magical phenomenology underlying its utilization require some explanation. First, a word about the phenomenology of ancient Near Eastern magic: The magical texts from Ugarit dealing with snake bite (Levine-de Tarragon 1987) relate, somewhat in the manner of the Babylonian Namburbi texts (Astour 1968), how a magical practitioner charms poisonous snakes, and induces them to exhaust their venom. The services of this practitioner, called *mlḥš* "charmer, pronouncer of incantations," were sought out by those suffering from snakebite. The actions that the *mlḥš* sets in motion are significant: He seeks to "remove" the venom from the poisonous snakes, an action conveyed by the Ugaritic verb *abd,* conjugated in the intensive stem, and cognate with Hebrew *'ibbēd.* (For the meanings associated with this verb, see Notes to Num 21:29, below.) The venom is then collected, an action conveyed by the Ugaritic verb *isp* (Hebrew *'-s-p*). To achieve his purpose, the magical practitioner secures access to well-guarded but indispensable incantation texts. He recites the incantations, and in the process invokes an entire pantheon of deities, listed in pairs, to assist him in gathering up the venom so as to prevent its further, pernicious utilization.

There is more to the Ugaritic texts, which exhibit a mythological dimension, as well. What is most relevant in them for our understanding of the incident of the bronze serpent is not the magical technique of the Ugaritic practitioner, but the major involvement of divine powers in the cure. The Ugaritic texts teach an important lesson about the dynamics of ancient Near Eastern magic in general. Although magical praxis itself tends to be automatic, almost chemical in its workings, it cannot be initiated and will not work unless divine power authorizes it. In the Neo-Assyrian magical texts, we read of Ea as the deity in charge of magic who, in some instances, actually teaches Marduk how to make the magic work. The Neo-Assyrian texts record how Ea is called upon for assistance through prayer and incantation. In the Comments to Numbers 22–24 it will be shown how this understanding of the divine role in magic helps to explain Balaam's predicament. He could not use his usual gifts and techniques without YHWH's approval.

It turns out that prayer and magic are not mutually exclusive avenues of approach to powerful deities. In fact, they are part of the same process, and the efficacy of magic is basically a function of divine will, though its practice is a human endeavor. The incident of the bronze serpent is an excellent example of the interaction of prayer with magical praxis, and in no way assails the power of the God of Israel. On the contrary: It reaffirms YHWH's power. The many attempts to explain away the account of this incident, on the grounds that, if taken at face value, it would conflict with biblical monotheism, reflect a basic misunderstanding of ancient Near Eastern magical phenomenology as known to us from comparative sources (Levine 1969).

The specific principle at work in the utilization of the bronze serpent is sympathetic magic. In this instance, one combats pernicious snakes by enlisting in the cause a more powerful snake, or, to be precise, an empowered snake capable of destroying the inimical one. The identity in form or in nature of the friendly power with the inimical power is what is expressed in the term "sympathetic." In modern immunology one uses serums of the same composition as the disease or virus to fight its infectious effects. The sympathetic principle explains the utilization of a goat in combating Azazel, the goat-demon of the wilderness, as prescribed in Leviticus 16 (Levine 1989b:106–108). Another biblical example is the Philistine response to infection either by mice or by some sort of bodily inflammation. They fashioned golden images of the infectious creatures, or of boils perhaps, and these did the trick in relieving the affliction. In ancient Near Eastern art, one often finds snakes drawn upon or sculpted onto storage jars, for instance, to protect their contents from intruders or from defilement. A bronze image of a snake is, therefore, an appropriate artifact for the purposes involved. What requires further explanation is the technique of healing projected in the account of the bronze serpent. One is healed by gazing at a symbolic and potent artifact. One way of understanding such eye contact is that it served as a signal. The gaze of the afflicted person set in motion the curative powers of the serpent. It may be that the bronze serpent was thought of as returning the gaze, or radiating power, and in so doing destroyed the poison in the body of the afflicted person. This suggests a slightly different interpretation: The gaze of the afflicted may have represented a form of appeal to the bronze serpent, an appeal answered in the form of healing. In phenomenological terms, gazing at a potent image is similar to gazing at the countenance of powerful beings such as deities and kings.

Finally, the relationship between the present tale and the report preserved in 2 Kings 18:4 requires discussion. There we read that the pious king, Hezekiah, had the bronze serpent called Nehushtan removed from the Temple courtyard in Jerusalem because the people had taken to offering sacrifices before it. Some have speculated that the account of the incident in Numbers 21 had an etiological purpose, namely, to explain the origins of the snake cult of Hezekiah's time. More likely, the notation in 2 Kings 18:4 was polemical in tone, expressing the attitude of zealous monotheists of that period to the effect that any iconic symbol is susceptible to degeneration. It may be hypostatized, so that divine power is attributed to what was originally merely an instrument of power, or a manifestation of it (Haran 1968).

So will it be that when anyone who is bitten gazes upon it

The customary conditional formulations in Numbers 21:8–9 complement each other, and project a sequence of tenses. Thus, in verse 8, *wehāyāh kol hannāšûk werā'āh* "So will it be that when anyone who is bitten gazes upon it," projects a present–future situation, whereas in verse 9, *wehāyāh 'im nāšak wehibbîṭ* "So it was that if a serpent had bitten a person, he would look," projects the form *wehāyāh* as perfect: "So it was," and recapitulates what is presumed to have already happened. For similar formulations cf. Genesis 4:14, 38:9, Exodus 4:8–9.

10–11. The toponyms Oboth and Iyye-Abarim (translated "hills of Abarim" in NJPS) are unidentified and can be located only on the basis of where the text locates them, namely, in the desert facing Moab from the East. It is not clear exactly where the southern border of Moab with Edom was supposed to be located when the Israelites passed through, but Zered Gorge is the prime candidate.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 21:12–20: THE SCENIC ROUTE FROM ZERED GORGE TO THE ARNON

12. *encamping at Zered Gorge.* As discussed in the Introduction to Numbers (Levine 1993:55–56), the arrival of the Israelites at Zered Gorge coincided with the passing of the Wilderness Generation. This conclusion is suggested by the schedule of the Deuteronomist (Deut 2:13–14). The Hebrew *Naḥal Zered* has been identified as Wadi Hasa (Herion 1992a, in *ABD* VI:1082). Area surveys have produced ceramic finds indicating habitation in the area during the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age. The Hebrew *naḥal* corresponds to Arabic *wadi*, and has normally been translated "brook, stream," translations that are certainly correct. The rendering "gorge" is more functional than lit-

eral. (NOTE: *After visiting Naḥal Zered and Naḥal Yabboq on a trip to Jordan, I realized that these were both great gorges, mighty canyons that are overpowering in their height, depth and massiveness, whereas the actual streams that run through them are small and unremarkable. Crossing them on the ground was and remains to this day a formidable feat. Accordingly, I decided to change my translation of Hebrew naḥal to "gorge" in these cases, so as to convey the sense of wonderment that I had experienced.*)

13. *They continued their march from that point.* In its presently compressed form, Numbers 21:13 continues to chart the progress of the Israelite march, without reference to the passing of the Wilderness Generation. The next station on the Israelite march lay across the Arnon river, in the desert to the east, that "extended" (the Hebrew verb *y-ṣ-'*) from the Amorite border. The Arnon is designated as the northern border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorite territory. Numbers 21:13 thus sets the scene for a poetic citation that serves to confirm this location.

14–15. *On this very matter was it stated.* The verbal form *yē'āmēr* here represents either the old preterite, "It was said," or conveys a progressive sense: "It is customarily said."

The key to a proper appreciation of the literary function of the several poetic excerpts preserved in Numbers 21 is to be found in the Hebrew idiom *'al kēn* that introduces two of the citations (Num 21:14, 27). The Hebrew *'al kēn* usually expresses cause and anticipates result, and is accordingly translated "therefore, because of-," or the like. Here, a different meaning seems to be required, one that reflects the literary function of the poetic excerpts themselves. These poetic excerpts are cited from epic collections like the present *sēper milḥamōt YHWH* "the Chronicle of the Wars of YHWH" as proof-texts. That epic poetry enjoyed an authoritative status may be inferred from several sequences observable in Numbers 21. Thus, Numbers 21:13 records that the border of Moab was marked by the Arnon river, whereupon Numbers 21:14–15 confirm this geographic location by citing an epic source that states as much. Similarly, Numbers 21:16 records the march to Beer, whereupon Numbers 21:17–18 cite the words of a song to a famous well (Hebrew *be'ēr*), after which the site was named. Finally, Numbers 21:26 records that Sihon, the Amorite king, ruled in Heshbon, whereupon Numbers 21:27–30 confirm this in the words of a ballad that refers to Heshbon as Sihon's capital. It would seem, therefore, that epic collections were cited as authoritative sources in order to confirm what the narrative chronicle recorded. If so, the Hebrew *'al kēn* should be regarded as a formula directing the reader to these very citations.

The comparable biblical-Aramaic idiom *'al denāh* may yield the requisite meaning for the Hebrew *'al ken,* for it, too, connotes cause in some of its usage, while at the same time serving as a formula of reference. The connotation of cause is evident in Ezra 4:15: *'al denāh qiryetā' dāk hoḥorbat* "On account of this, this city has been destroyed.” But, in Ezra 5:17, *‘al deñah yišlaḥ ‘alênā’* means: “On this matter may he notify us,” and in Daniel 7:16 *‘al kol denāh* means: “Concerning this entire matter.” Here, too, the Hebrew *‘al kēn* is best rendered: “In this matter, concerning this,” a meaning rare in biblical Hebrew. We may compare Genesis 10:8–9 for a similar sequence: Genesis 10:8 begins by stating that Nimrod was a warrior-hunter, and thereupon the following verse, Genesis 10:9, continues: *‘al kēn yĕ’āmēr* “Concerning this it was said: ‘Like Nimrod, a warrior-hunter in the presence of YHWH.” There, too, an epic citation confirms the narrative, and is quoted for that purpose. Quite possibly, this is the function of such epic poems as Exodus 15, the Song of the Sea, and Judges 5, the Song of Deborah, both of which are preceded by narratives covering the events celebrated in the poems.

On occasion, the Hebrew Bible refers the reader to other ancient collections. In Joshua 21:2, we read of *sēper hayyāšār* “The Chronicle of Heroes (?),” there cited to confirm that the sun and moon stood still until Joshua and the Israelites had defeated the Amorites (see further, in Notes to Numbers 23:10, where the Hebrew *môt yešārîm* is explained). The epic source mentioned here, *sēper milḥamōt YHWH*, is unique to this chapter, although the theme of *milḥamōt YHWH* “the wars of YHWH,” figures elsewhere. Saul enjoins David to fight “the wars of YHWH” (1 Sam 18:12) and Abigail, in extending her blessing to David, acknowledges that he is fighting “the wars of YHWH” (1 Sam 25:28).

The theme of the wars of YHWH is expressed in three dimensions: (a) “Wars of YHWH” are conquests and military engagements commanded by the God of Israel. Together with the divine promise to grant Israel the Land of Canaan came the command to the Israelites to conquer it. This enterprise is conveyed by the verb *y-r-š*, that does not, in the first instance, connote “inheritance” but rather seizure of the land; its conquest (Num 13:30, 21:24, Deut 1:21); (b) In “the wars of YHWH,” the God of Israel fights on behalf of Israel, his people. On this basis, the wars they fight on their way to the Promised Land and in the conquest of Canaan are God’s wars. Furthermore, Israel’s enemies are YHWH’s enemies, a theme documented in biblical literature from the eve of the Exodus (Exod 14:25), through a period of wandering (Exod 17:10), and until the wars of the conquest of Canaan, celebrated in the Song of Deborah (Judg 5:31). The Song of Deborah refers to the Israelite militias as *‘am YHWH* “YHWH’s fighting force” (Judg 5:11). The Book of Judges, in particular, gives poignant expression to the theme of “the wars of YHWH.” Israel’s heroic judges are infused with “the spirit of YHWH (*rûaḥ YHWH*)”; and (c) There is, finally, a mythological dimension to the theme of “the wars of YHWH.” It relates to theomachy, the war of creation, wherein the God of Israel subdued the forces of nature, represented as other gods, and subsequently ruled over them. This concept is expressed, once again, in the Song of Deborah: “From the heavens they did battle; the stars from their courses did battle with Sisera" (Judg 5:20). This is a veiled reference to astral religion, the synthesis of mythological deities with stars and planets, such as the sun and moon. In its biblical context, this verse alludes to YHWH's enlistment of the stars to do battle on Israel's behalf (Levine 1989).

Returning to the poetic excerpt preserved in Numbers 21:14b–15, we encounter textual and exegetical difficulties. Some modern interpreters have assumed that the first hemistich has lost a word or two in transmission, and that the original poem had stated that the Israelites had "conquered" Waheb in Suphah, or accomplished some such result. In these terms, the accusative particle *'et* would introduce the direct object of the missing verb and its subject. D. L. Christensen (1974) ingeniously read consonantal *'t* as *'ātā* "he came," and the *wh* of Masoretic *whb* as *YH[W]*, yielding the following translation:

'ātā YH[W] besûpāh	Yah[weh] came in a whirlwind;
'ātā neḥālîm 'Arnôn	He came to the branch *wadis* of the Arnon.

Christensen continued his translation in this vein, making YHWH the implied subject of the entire excerpt, and taking consonantal *'šd* (usually understood as *'ešed* "cataract") to represent a verbal form *'āsar*. All of the "leaning" (Hebrew *nāṭāh*) and "extending" (Hebrew *nisʿan*) describe acts of God, rather than describing topographical or geographical features. M. Weippert (1979) adopted Christensen's translation with modifications, and one must agree that it has the advantage of adding significance to the poetic excerpt. The poem would now relate the advance of the God of Israel into northern Moab, just north of Arnon, which was Amorite territory, so we are told. As such, this excerpt would take its place among the poetry of theophany (and theomachy), alongside Deuteronomy 33:2, Judges 5:4–5, and other similar poems. In fact, the verb *'ātā* occurs in Deuteronomy 33:2, where it indeed describes the arrival of the God of Israel. Reading the same here would make the attribution of Numbers 21:14b–15 to the Chronicle of the Wars of YHWH topically appropriate.

Although Christensen was logical in his method and sensitive to biblical diction, his interpretation required him to alter the consonantal text to an extent that exceeds the usual limits. It is as if he forced this brief poetic excerpt into an interpretive mold. The difficulties of Numbers 21:14b–15 may be surmounted in other ways, bearing in mind that this excerpt was cited only to establish the location of the Moabite-Amorite border at the Arnon. Generally, Numbers 21 does not speak of theophany, or of the acts of YHWH, but of the Israelite advance, and of armies threatening and battling each other over the conquest of territory. It is preferable, therefore, to take the particle *'et* not as indicating the accusative, but rather in its function as a preposition, meaning "with, at, near," a function it retains, significantly, in geographical descriptions. Compare Judges 3:19: "But he, himself, returned from Pesilim, which is near Gilgal (*ʾašer ʾet haggilgāl*)." This interpretation eliminates the necessity of supplying a verb that would have, in turn, called for a direct object. Instead we have in the first stiche two successive locations introduced by prepositions: *ʾet wāhēb . . . weʾet hanneḥālîm* "At Waheb . . . and at the *wadis*," thus producing symmetry. As a toponym, Waheb remains unidentified, but some have suggested identifying Suphah with Suph (Deut 1:1), located by context in an area facing the Transjordanian desert. Alternatively, the Hebrew *sûpāh* may simply mean "storm, whirlwind," as Christensen took it. One wonders if *Wāhēb*, as well as *Mattānāh* and *Naḥlîʾēl* in Numbers 21:19 below, might not, after all, be symbolic or allegorical names. Ahituv (1983) suggests as much for Beer in Numbers 21:16, noting analogues in such would-be toponyms as *Mārāh* "bitter," *Massāh* "trial, test" and *Merîbāh* "contention." The Hebrew *mattānāh* means "gift," and *naḥîʾēl* means "estate of El" (or: "El is my estate"), and, in like manner, *wāhēb* could be taken to mean "gift, grant," from the verb *y-h-b* "to give," a verb more at home in Aramaic.

[At] the Arnon, and the cataract of the wadis.

The Masoretic phrasing has been altered to convey a clear meaning. The name of the river, *ʾArnôn*, is consistently indeterminate, even in the absolute state (see above, in Num 21:13, and cf. Judg 11:18, 26). The Hebrew *ʾešed* "cataract" is unique, but feminine **ʾašdāh* is reflected by the plural construct *ʾašdōt*, in Deuteronomy 3:17, 4:48, Joshua 12:8–9, 13:20. The Masoretic *Qere*, *ʾēš dāt*, in Deuteronomy 33:2 (*Kethib*: *ʾšdt*), probably represents original *ʾašēdôt* "cataracts," a plural form that actually occurs in Joshua 10:40. Both the masculine and feminine forms derive from the root *š-d-y* "to cast down, throw," best known in the Aramaic dialects, where we find a secondary formation *ʾ-š-d*, based on the Aphel stem, meaning "to gush, pour out" (*HALAT*: 90, s. v. **ʾašed*). The noun forms are based on this secondary formation. The cataract is said "to bend" (the verb *nāṭāh*) toward Ar of Moab. We speak idiomatically of a "bend" in a river, and Akkadian applies the image of "neck" to rivers and shores (*CAD* K:449–450, s.v. *kišādu*, meaning 3). In a similar way, the verb *n-ṭ-h* may express this phenomenon in Hebrew. Thus, Isaiah 66:12: "I shall bend toward her (*hinennî nōṭeh ʾēlêhā*) like a stream [bringing] prosperity, and like a torrential *wadi* [bringing] the wealth of nations, and you shall suckle." The Niphal stem of the verb *šāʿan* "to lean" almost always takes prepositional *ʿal* "over, upon" (Judg 16:26, 2 Sam 5:18). Here, this verb is used uniquely in a topographical and geographical context, where it means "to hug, abut," with prepositional *lamed*. The usual relative, *ʾašer*, is better taken in the sense of "where," as is often the sense of its Akkadian cognate *ašar* (*CAD* A II:413–416). This is also true in Numbers 21:30, within the Heshbon Ballad.

The identification of Ar of Moab remains uncertain. This toponym is mentioned further on in the Heshbon Ballad (Num 21:28), as well as in Deuteronomy 2:9, 18, 29, and in the late oracle of Isaiah 15:1. According to Deuteronomy 2:18, Ar is at the Moabite border, which would fit the sense of the present poem, whose function it is to establish where the northern Moabite border was. It therefore speaks of cataracts abutting the northern Moabite border at Ar. Some have identified ‘Ā*r* as Khirket el’-Meṣha‘, south of the Arnon (see Aharoni 1993:97, map 128), but this is problematic, because the territory between the Zered Gorge and the Arnon was not conquered by the Amorites, according to the JE chronicler of Numbers 21, and was not in dispute. Perhaps ‘Ā*r* is an abbreviated form of ‘*Arō‘ēr*, Arabic ‘*Arā‘ir*, a site known to be just north of the Arnon (see Notes to Num 32:34). Weippert (1979) summarizes the confusion about the presumed toponym, ‘Ā*r Mô’āb*, variously read as ‘*ārê Mô’āb* "the cities of Moab" or as ‘*îr Mô’āb* "the capital city of Moab." In any event, in the present instance the designation ‘Ā*r* must refer to a site just north of the Arnon that marked the border between Moab and the Amorites.

16. *From that point to Beer.* The chronicle resumes its delineation of the Israelite route, taking up where Numbers 21:13 left off. The Israelites continued their march to a site named Beer, a fact confirmed by the poetic citation that takes up the two following verses (Num 21:17–18). As has been noted, Ahituv (1983) is undoubtedly correct in classifying this would-be toponym as merely descriptive of the site of the well encountered by the Israelites.

17. *It was then that Israel sang this song.* For the unusual caption *’āz yāšîr* . . . *’et haššîrāh hazzō’t* "then he sang . . . this song," cf. Exodus 15:1, in the caption of the Song of the Sea. Adverbial *’āz* "then" serves as a tense indicator, assuring that the imperfect form *yāšîr* is understood as a preterite.

"Surge, oh well!"—they sang *to it.*

Reference is to a known song, entitled ‘*alî be’ēr* "Surge, oh well." It is this song that the Israelites sang upon their arrival at a site named *Be’ēr*, which means "well." In Isaiah 27:2, the title of an ancient song is referred to in a similar manner: "On that day 'Vineyard of Delight' (*kerem ḥemed*)—sing to it" (‘*annû lāh*). There was a song entitled *kerem heṃed* that the people were instructed to sing to the land. After referring to this song, the prophetic text continues with words attributed to God, who promises to fructify the land: "I, YHWH, keep watch over it; I water it at every moment." In a similar way, the text here records that the Israelites sang a known song, referred to by its opening verse, which is all we retain of it. What follows is their current poem about the history of the well.

The verb ‘*-l-h* "to rise, ascend" is not frequently employed to describe the movement of water, but its usage in Isaiah 8:7 comes close. In an allegory on the king of Assyria, the prophet describes the inundation of the mighty Euphrates: "It shall rise above all its channels (*we‘ālāh ‘al kol ’apîqāw*), and flow over all its beds" (also cf. Ps 104:7; and see Anbar 1993). The verb ‘*-n-h* often means "to respond, answer," and yet its primary connotation is the utterance of sound, especially musical sound, and also speech (Deut 26:5). In Psalm 147:7, ʿ-*n-h* is parallel with *zimmēr* "to sing, play music." Exodus 32:18 is particularly instructive:

> It is not the tune of the song of triumph (*qôl ʿanôt gebûrāh*) that I hear, nor the tune of the song of defeat (*qôl ʿanôt ḥalûšāh*); it is the sound of music (*qôl ʿannôt*) that I hear.

The Masoretes vocalized the third occurrence *ʿannôt* (Piel construct), not *ʿanôt* (Qal construct) as in the preceding two occurrences. More likely, the third occurrence represents the absolute form of the Qal-based noun, to be vocalized *ʿānôt* "music, song." It was, after all, the sound of revelry that Moses heard as he descended the mountain. The sense of "responding" so often associated with the verb ʿ-*n-h* may have derived from the antiphonal character of choral music. This choral antiphony is dramatized in Exodus 15. The male Israelites "sing" the Song of the Sea, and Miriam and the women repeat the refrain. Thus, Exodus 15:21–22: *wattaʿan lāhem Miryām* "Then Miriam sang to them in response: 'Sing to YHWH,' " etc. In the present verse, the Masoretic vocalization, *ʿenû* (masculine imperative plural) "Sing!" has been changed to *ʿānû* (third person masculine perfect) "They sang."

18a. *Oh well that the commanders delved.* The parallelism of the verbs *k-r-h//ḥ-p-r,* both of which connote excavation, is implied in Psalm 7:16: "He dug a cistern and excavated it (*bôr kārāh wayyaḥperēhû*)."

The official titles employed in this excerpt from an ancient poem exemplify the interaction of leadership roles in biblical Israel. Such terms underwent significant development as the structure of Israelite society changed. Three terms occur in the present poetic excerpt, each with a discrete matrix. Each calls attention, by the way, to the relevance of the Song of Deborah for a proper interpretation of the Song of the Well: (a) The Hebrew title *śār,* here translated "chieftain," and taken to designate a tribal office, is of uncertain etymology, and has diverse connotations. The context of the term *śār* in our poem, a context shared by the Song of Deborah (Judg 5:15), indicates a tribal hierarchy, not the royal establishment, which also included *śārîm* (2 Kings 9:5, Hos 3:4). The royal context is suggested in Proverbs 8:16–17 (to be cited presently in another connection), where it occurs alongside *melākîm* "kings." But, in the first instance, one is called *śār* because he commands a band of fighters or an organized labor force, such as is indicated by the titles *śar (hā) ʾelep* "the chief of a militia/clan" (1 Sam 18:13), and *śār ṣābāʾ* "commander of a military unit" (2 Kings 5:1); (b) The Hebrew *nādîb,* in *nedîbê hāʿām* "the knights of the fighting force" expresses a status based on economic capacity. In the first instance, one is called *nādîb* because he possesses wealth, which he generously contributes to the costs of war and to other collective enterprises. The Hithpael, reflexive form *hitnaddēb* in the Song of Deborah (Judg 5:22, 9) may express more than the positive attitude of the volunteer who answers the call to arms. It probably means "to contribute wealth, to commit one's resources." This would seem to be its functional sense in the Song of Deborah, so that the classification *hammitnaddebîm bāʿām* is best rendered: "those who committed their resources among the fighting force"; and (c) The Hebrew *meḥōqēq* means "lawmaker, magistrate." In the Song of Deborah, Judges 5, we read of *ḥôqeqê Yiśrāʾèl* "the magistrates of Israel," and further, in Judges 5:14, of *meḥōqeqîm* who answered the call. The matrix of the Hebrew term *meḥōqēq* is surely legal or juridical. One was called *meḥōqēq*, in the first instance, because he served as a judge or enacted (literally "inscribed") laws. Very often, persons of wealth served as judges and issued rulings because they had the power to back up or even enforce their rulings. One recalls the words of Wisdom, personified, as she speaks in Proverbs 8:16–17:

> Through me kings govern,
> And commanders issue just rulings (*yeḥoqêqû sẹdeq*);
> Through me princes (śārîm) exercise rule,
> And nobles (*un̂edib̂îm*), all just judges.

Any number of leaders and officials bore staffs in ancient Israel, as elsewhere. In the Song of Deborah (Judg 5:14) scribes bore staffs, and here, in the Song of the Well, the *meḥōqēq* bore a mišʿenet, a term that may designate a walking stick (Exod 21:19, Zech 8:4), as well as a shepherd's rod (Ps 23:4). But it also designates a ceremonial staff or scepter (Judg 6:21, 2 Kings 4:29, 31), as is the sense here.

The received form *bimḥōqēq* (consonantal *bmḥqq*), with prepositional *beth*, is difficult, as is the lack of agreement in number between the singular *bimḥōqēq* and the plural *bemišʿanōtām* "with *their* scepters." D. N. Freedman (personal communication) is of the view that the poem is referring to ceremonial staves, perhaps known as *mišʿanôt meḥōqēq* "magistrate's staves," and doubts that there is reference to the actual participation of such magistrates, only to that of *śārîm* and *nedîbîm*. It remains, however, to explain the curious order and syntax of the received text, or if not, to emend the text. An alternative would be to suggest that a scribe, seeing two successive words, each beginning with the sequence *beth* + *mem*, rushed to the second of these before affixing final *mem* to the former. Perhaps it should read *bimhōqeqîm bemisʿanōtām* (reflecting consonantal *bmḥqq[m] bmšʿntm*), wherein the first preposition is distributive, and the second relational, yielding the sense: "Among magistrates with/bearing their scepters." For relational *beth* see Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley 1960:379–380, s.v. 119, letters i and l. This interpretation is, once again, suggested by a verse in the Song of Deborah, Judges 5:14: "From Machir came down magistrates (*meḥōqeqîm*); from Zebulun such as hold the marshal's staff (*mōšekîm bešēbeṭsōpēr*)." In the present case, one doubts that the well was actually dug by means of such ceremonial staffs, whether or not actual *meḥōqeqîm* were involved. More likely, the poem tells us that commanders and leaders had the well dug, thereby attributing factitive force to the verbs that are employed. The point is that the poem is describing the leaders as those who bear scepters indicative of their status.

The interpretation proposed here would argue against the ingenious translation of the present verse in *NJPS*: "With maces, with their own staffs." True, in Genesis 49:10, *šēbeṭ* "staff" is parallel with *meḥōqēq* "magistrate," but there Hebrew *sebet* is taken in the metonymous sense of "staff [bearer]." To translate *meḥōqēq* as "staff" would require metonymy in the reverse direction, and that is unattested elsewhere. The end of the poem, proper, comes in Numbers 21:18a, with the itinerary resuming in Numbers 21:18b–20.

Apart from informing the reader how the pseudo-toponym, *Be'ēr*, received its name, what does this citation have to do with the primary agenda of the JE historiographers? How does it confirm the location of the northern Moabite border? Or is this the only historiographic agenda operative at this point? One could maintain that to dig a well was to assert certain rights in the area near it. Gray (Gray-*ICC*:288–289) cites the custom of singing to wells among nomadic Arabs, and even mentions, in the name of the scholar Budde, the practice of lightly covering over wells discovered in transit, and then prying them open again with ceremonial staves, thereby demonstrating a claim to them. Although a bit too literal, perhaps, Budde's interpretation correctly suggests that the well, lying just north of the Arnon, testifies to the legitimacy of the Israelite claim over northern Moab.

18b–20. One could translate all of the locations listed here as toponyms: "From Midbar to Mattanah" (thus *NJPS*) instead of "from the desert to Mattanah." The Septuagint has *kaì 'apò phréatos*, suggesting the reading *mibbe'ēr* "from the well," or perhaps "from Beer," the would-be toponym just mentioned in Numbers 21:16. As suggested above (in Notes to Num 21:14b), Mattanah and Nahliel, like Waheb, were symbolic names, not actual toponyms, and were generated to convey the sense of "gift, grant." Only Bamoth would represent an actual toponym (see below, in Notes to Num 21:28).

And from Bamoth to the valley

The sense of *haggâi'* is directional: "[to] the valley." Numbers 21:20 is generally short on directional indicators. The sense is that from Bamoth the Israelites marched to the valley lying inside Moabite territory, and then up to the summit that overlooked the wasteland. Similarly, the Hebrew *rō'š happisgāh* "[to] the peak of the summit" is not prefixed.

in the open country of Moab

The Hebrew *sēdēh Mô’āb* is best taken as “the open country of Moab.” The word *śādeh* has many meanings, including “field, arable land,” but when used in construct with a place name in geographical descriptions, it often connotes what we mean by “open country, hinterland,” namely, land lying outside the cities and towns. Thus, *śedēh Ṣō‘an* is best rendered: “the hinterland of Tanis” (Ps 78:12, 43). Similarly, Obadiah 19:

> “Then they (the northern Israelites) shall possess the Negeb with the Esauite mountains, and the southern coastal plain with [the land of] the Philistines; and they shall possess the open country of Ephraim and the open country of Samaria (*’et śedēh ’Eprayim we’et śedēh Šōmerôn*), and Benjamin [shall possess] the Gilead.”

In 1 Samuel 6:1, 27:7, 11 we find the designation *śedēh Pelištîm* “the open country of the Philistines,” and Genesis 14:7 attests *śedēh ha‘amālēqî* “the open country of the Amalekites.” Judges 20:6 represents even more general usage: “Then I seized my concubine, and cut her into sections, and dispatched her throughout the entire country of Israelite territory (*bekol śedēh naḥalat Yiśrā’ēl*), and in Genesis 32:3 *sadeh* is actually synonymous with *’ereṣ* “land”: “Then Jacob dispatched messengers in advance of him to Esau his brother, to the land of Seir (*’arṣāh Śe‘îr*), [to] the open country of Edom (*śedēh ’Edôm*; cf. Judg 5:4, Hos 12:13). Just as usage of Hebrew *śādeh* seems to have expanded to mean “open country,” so, in reverse, Moabite usage of *’rṣ*, in the Mesha Stele seems to have contracted, so that, for example, *’rṣ Mhdbh* means “the hinterland/open country of Medeba” (Gibson 1971:74; Mesha Stele, lines 7–8). In some instances, one senses that *śādeh* designates high ground, and should be rendered “plateau,” as is true of *śedēh ṣōpîm* “lookout plateau” in Numbers 23:14. One is reminded of the range of connotations attendant upon Akkadian *ṣēru*, which in contrast to *ālu* “town,” means “open country,” but that may also refer to high ground (*CAD* Ṣ, 141, s.v. *ṣēru*, meaning 3). For the designation *śedēh Mô’āb*, itself, cf. Gen 36:33, Ruth 1:6.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 21:21–22:1: ISRAELITE CONQUESTS FROM HESHBON TO DIBON AND IN THE BASHAN TO THE NORTH

This part of Numbers 21 is singular because of the appearance in it of the Heshbon Ballad, a poem of dramatic quality, but also one exceptionally difficult to interpret in terms of its literary function and historical references.

21–22. *Then the Israelites dispatched messengers to Sihon, the king of the Amorites.* The essential record of the delegation to the Amorites (Num 21:21–23), requesting passage through their territory, seems to be by the same hand as the record of the delegation to Edom, a subject discussed by Weippert (1982). The terms of the standard request are explained in Notes to Numbers 20:14–21; Levine 1993:491–494.

23. Like the king of Edom (Num 20:18, 20), so, too, Sihon, the Amorite king, refused the Israelites passage through his land. But whereas the Israelites turned away after being confronted by Edomite forces (Num 20:21), they were now compelled to engage the Amorites in battle, since they had no alternative route of access to the Jordan. Weippert (1979) correctly observes that the Hebrew orthography *Syḥn* in Numbers 21:28 reflects a development from *Sâiḥôn,* expressing a diphthong, analogous to *Dybn* from Dâibôn, as in *hdybni* "the Daibonite" in the Mesha Stele (Gibson 1981:74, lines 1–2), and there is also the fact that LXX reads *Dâibôn.* Weippert notes any number of Ammonite personal names and ethnonyms constructed in this way. The diphthong was lost in the Masoretic vocalizations *Sîḥôn* and *Dîbôn.*

He arrived at Jahaz, and did battle with the Israelites.

Jahaz (Hebrew *Yahaṣ*), perhaps Khirbet el-Medeiyineh, where the main battle between Israel and the Amorites occurred, is mentioned in the Mesha Stele (lines 18–19) as one of the towns that were fortified by Omri, king of Israel, or possibly by one of his successors. It is located in east-central Moab, in the Tableland (Deut 2:32, Judg 11:20; Map 1). Jahaz is mentioned in Isaiah 15:4, and Jeremiah 48:21, 34, in similar laments over the destruction of Moab. We are told that wailing over the devastation reached all the way to Jahaz, suggesting that the poet knew it as a distant place. As the JE chronicler of Numbers 21 saw matters, all of the territory north of the Arnon was Amorite at the time of the Israelite advance. However, its localities are known to us from documentary sources as Moabite towns (see the Comments to Numbers 21).

24. *The Israelites slew his forces by the blade of the sword.* The commonplace Hebrew idiom *lepî ḥereb* "by the blade/edge of the sword," expresses a specialized sense of Hebrew *peh* "mouth" (cf. the reduplicative form *pîpiyyôt* "two edged" in Isa 41:15, Ps 149:6). The Israelites utterly defeated the Amorite forces, and "took possession" (*wayyîraš*) of their land from the Arnon on the south to the Jabbok (Zerqa) on the north. To the east, the Israelites went as far as the Ammonite border, refraining from attacking the Ammonites, whose border was strongly fortified. This is the force of the Hebrew *ʿaz* "strong, fierce." Nonetheless, we read further on in Numbers 21:32 that Israel took possession of Jazer, located on the Ammonite border, but that was either independent (so Weippert 1979), or inhabited by Amorites at the time.

25. *The Israelites captured all of these towns.* This is the force of the verb

l-q-ḥ in military contexts, where territory is won in battle and gained through invasion or by annexation (cf. Deut 3:4, Judg 11:13, 15, 1 Kings 20:34).

including Heshbon and all its dependencies.

The Hebrew *bat* "daughter," also in the plural, *bānôt,* serves as a botanical term meaning 'offshoots" (Gen 49:22). In the same vein, the small towns or villages in the hinterland of a major town, or in its environs, are referred to as *bānôt,* as in the case here with reference to Heshbon (cf. Num 21:32, below, and Num 32:42, Jos 15:4, Judg 1:27). The frequent entries in the Assyrian royal annals registering the capture of major cities contain a similar designation: *URU.MEŠ ṣiḫrūti ša limētišunu* "small towns which are situated around them" (*CAD* A I, 381, s.v. *ālu,* 1, c). What we have in this verse is a record of the settlement of the Amorite cities by the Israelites, including Heshbon and its environs. Numbers 21 thus correlates with Numbers 32, which, in its various parts, documents the settlement of diverse areas in Transjordan, including Gilead, by the Israelite tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh; more precisely, by the clan of Yair, son of Manasseh. In effect, this is how the JE historiographers cast the beginnings of the overall Israelite community in Transjordan.

26. *He had fought against the earlier Moabite king.* Now that Heshbon has been mentioned, Numbers 21:26 explains, in the manner of a gloss, how it happened that Heshbon had come into the possession of Sihon, king of the Amorites, to start with. Sihon had fought a war against an earlier or former king of Moab, and conquered all his land up to the Arnon, an act conveyed once again by the verb *l-q-ḥ* "to take." The Hebrew *hāriʾšôn* does not always mean "the first" in an ordinal succession. Quite often it simply indicates priority as, for example, in Genesis 26:1: "Apart from the earlier famine (*hārāʿāb hāriʾšôn*) that occurred in the days of Abraham." Also cf. Genesis 40:13: "Then you shall place Pharaoh's chalice in his hand in accordance with the earlier practice (*kammišpāṭ hāriʾšôn*) of your giving him drink." The same sense of priority—relative, not absolute—is conveyed by the plural *hāriʾšônîm,* feminine *hāriʾšônôt* (2 Kings 17:34, Ps 89:50, Isa 41:20, 22, 42:9, 48:3, 65:16–17). Most relevant is Jeremiah 34:5: "In peace shall you die, and with the burnt offerings of your ancestors, the earlier kings who were before you (*hammelākîm hāriʾšônîm ʾašer hāyû lepānêkā*) will they burn offerings to you." The proposed translation avoids the confusion over the identity of the supposedly first king of Moab and discussion was to the antiquity of kingship in Moab.

There is the not too subtle innuendo that the Moabites had never held onto this disputed land very long. It must be realized that this single verse, Numbers 21:26, significantly changes the function and meaning of the ballad, as will be explained presently in Notes to Numbers 21:27, the first verse of the ballad, and sets the stage for the Heshbon Ballad as a celebration of an Amorite victory over the Moabites, whereas it was originally intended as a celebration of an Israelite victory over the Amorites.

The *Sitz-im-Leben* of this ballad, as well as its literary integrity, have been the subject of many studies. Here the text of the poem will be explained verse by verse, on the assumption that it is of one cloth, though not without a significant interpolation (see further in Notes to Num 21:29). Two fairly minor textual emendations will also be proposed in Numbers 21:30, in an effort to elicit a clearer meaning for the poem as a whole. It has been suggested that Numbers 21:30 does not, in fact, belong with the poem and that it was taken from a list of towns, suffering textual damage in the process. Although this is possible, it is significant that in style, Numbers 21:30 closely resembles the brief poetic excerpt in Numbers 21:14b–15, in which towns and locations are mentioned. It is also noteworthy that the laments over Moab preserved in Isaiah 15–16 and Jeremiah 48 refer to numerous towns and locales, and this seems to be typical of laments, in general. Thus, the lament over David and Jonathan refers to Gath and Ashkelon, as well as Mount Gilboa (2 Sam 1:20–21). Out of these considerations, Numbers 21:30 has been retained as part of the poem, but has been emended along suggested lines to enhance it clarity.

Inevitably, determinations as to how each verse is to be read are inseparable from larger considerations. It was thought, nevertheless, that in the interest of clarity a sequential, literary commentary should be provided here, anticipating conclusions that have been reached through historical analysis and the investigation of *Sitz-im-Leben*. The relevant findings will be presented in the Comments.

27a. *It is regarding this.* See Notes to Numbers 21:14 for the sense of the Hebrew *ʿal kēn.*

that the composers of mešālîm *recite.*

The participial form *mōšelîm* "composers of *mešālîm*" is denominative of the noun *māšāl,* whose meaning requires clarification. Anticipating the captions to the Balaam orations that characterize each of those poems, in turn, as a *māšāl,* it would be well to discuss this genre here. We are called upon to explain the basis on which each of these poems has been designated a *māšāl.*

In all that has been said about the *māšāl* as a genre of biblical compositions two viewpoints have dominated the discussion: (a) In the first instance, the *māšāl* is so-called because of its content, in that it establishes a comparison between similar concepts and phenomena, and then derives meaning from this comparison; and (b) the *māšāl* is so-called by virtue of its form, in that it is composed of two hemistich or longer verses of similar length or valence. The comparison expressed in the *māšāl* is of a poetic character, not a feature of content. In such terms, the prevalence of the *māšāl* in biblical wisdom literature would not testify to its original character, but would rather illustrate its applicability. The *māšāl* proved extremely suitable for expressing proverbs, which are usually formulated as stichs composed of two parts.

This latter interpretation was ventured by Paul Haupt (*apud* Gray-

ICC:345) at the beginning of the twentieth century, and although it has been questioned by many scholars, it may prove to be preferable after all. Haupt noted that in Akkadian, the verb *mašālu* may have the meaning "to be equal, to stand at the middle point." He further compares Hebrew *māšāl* with nominal *mišlu* in Akkadian, in the sense of "half, an equal part." On this basis, the biblical *māšāl* would be defined as a poetic line whose hemistichs are of equal or comparable length, or as a verse composed of two such equivalent stichs. Actually, Gray was one of those who questioned Haupt's theory, on the grounds that not every text called *māšāl* would qualify as poetic. He pointed to the two *mešālîm* cited in 1 Samuel 10:12 and 24:13 that seem not to be poetic. He could have added the *māšāl* in Ezekiel 16:44–47, which is not composed in poetic style, by the usual criteria. In fact, Ezekiel was partial to the *māšāl* (Ezek 12:22–23, 17:3–10, 18:23, 24:3–5), but not all of his actual *mešālîm* share the same literary character.

In response to these criticisms of Haupt's theory it should be admitted that the *māšāl* underwent adaptations. What we are seeking is an understanding of its primary characteristics, and there is more to recommend a definition of the *māšāl* as "balanced verse," than there is to defining it as "parable." Even some examples of the *māšāl* usually cited to demonstrate that it is not a poetic category are, on analysis, closer to being poetic than one might suppose. Thus, in 1 Samuel 24:13, the "ancient *māšāl*" (*mešal haqqadmōnî*) might qualify as poetic by virtue of its repetition of the root *r-š-ʿ* "to be wicked, guilty," if it is scanned in a certain way:

mērešāʿîm *yēṣēʾ rešaʿ*
"From the wicked comes wickedness."

It is possible that only part of the ancient *māšāl* is being quoted, making it more difficult to determine if it is poetic. In contrast, the lengthy parable on the Babylonian conquest of Judah in Ezekiel 17:3–10 hardly qualifies as poetry in its present form, but one could argue that it is based on an originally poetic oracle, given the degree of parallelism retained even in its present form. Similarly, Ezekiel 16:44–47 is hardly poetic in its entirety, but one could argue that two words were cited from the actual *māšāl*:

keʾimmāh *bittāh*
"Like mother [so] her daughter."

The rest of the passage (Ezek 16:45–47) might be seen as a prosaic explanation of this terse *māšāl*.

27b. *Come to Heshbon; how it is fortified! How firmly founded is Sihon's town!* In interpreting the poem, one could read the two verbs as mutually reinforcing: "Firmly built and well founded" (thus *NJPS*). The Masoretes indicated a period after the word *Ḥešbôn.* For reasons of versification, it may be preferable to separate the verbs, as has been done in the translation, and to begin the second colon with conjunctive *waw.* It is difficult to ascertain precisely either the tense or mode of the two verbs, *tibbāneh* and *wetikkônēn,* which are best conjugated as contracted Hithpael forms. Some have seen both irony and exhortation in their usage here. Thus Gray (Gray-ICC:301):

> "Let it be rebuilt! Let the city of Sihon be established!"

This rendering regards the verse as a taunt, as if to say: "Look at mighty Sihon's capital now, after what the Israelites have done to it!" Allowing for flexibility in parsing the verbs, this essential reading derives from a particular interpretation of what the Heshbon Ballad is about, namely, that it originally celebrated the very Israelite victory over the Amorites of which the historiographers of Numbers 21 speak, not an Amorite victory over the Moabites, as the ballad appears to be describing. In the Comments it will be proposed that, indeed, this is the original *Sitz-im-Leben* of the Heshbon Ballad. The original author of the ballad was not speaking of Sihon, the Amorite king, as the conqueror of Moab. Rather, he was speaking retrospectively, and in that vein he highlighted Heshbon, which he knew as the main Israelite fortress in Moab after its conquest by Omri, king of Israel, in the ninth century B.C.E., identifying it as Sihon's ancient capital. As will be shown in the Comments, this association was historically imprecise, although another town in the same area might well have been Sihon's capital. In turn, the JE redactor who interpolated Numbers 21:26 was probably the one who added the words *lemelek ʾEmōrî Sîḥôn* "to the Amorite king, Sihon" at the end of Numbers 21:29. By these interpolations he made Sihon of Heshbon the captor of the Moabites (see below, in Notes to Num 21:29).

Most likely, the verbs *tibbāneh* and *wetikkônēn* are cast in the indicative mood, and are to be regarded as old preterites. The passive-reflexive voice of the verbs has tended to impact their tense, yielding a durative rather than a punctive rendering. Functionally, the verb *b-n-h* may mean "to fortify" when said of towns, referring to the construction of walls, towers and the like, not merely to "building," as such (Jos 6:26, Isa 60:10). The Polel form, *kônēn,* connotes the construction of foundations upon which walls, buildings or artifacts such as thrones and columns rested (Exod 15:17, Isa 62:7, Ps 9:8). The parallelism of *b-n-h//kônēn* is rare, but occurs in Habakkuk 2:12:

hôy bōneh ʿîr bedāmîm
wekônen qiryāh beʿawlāh

Oh, one who builds a town through murder,
And who founds a capital in iniquity."

In Psalm 24:2, *b-n-h* is parallel with *yissad* "to found." The only other city called by the name of its founding monarch even after his reign had ended is "the city of David" (*ʿîr Dāwîd*) in 1 Kings 11:27, although one recalls *ʿîr Nāḥôr* "Nahor's town" in Genesis 24:10, where reference is to Nahor's hometown. Isaiah 29:1 speaks of Ariel, an epithet of Jerusalem, its temple, or of one of its quarters, as the *qiryāh* where David had encamped. In a later lament over the devastation of Moab, Jeremiah 48:45–46 paraphrase Numbers 21:28–29, and mention Heshbon as Sihon's town. This is interesting, because overall the lament of Jeremiah 48 shows no dependency on the ballad of Numbers 21, but is rather derivative of Isaiah 15–16. It would thus seem that the tradition of Heshbon as Sihon's capital survived for a long time. It is worth mentioning that there is no term in biblical Hebrew that precisely means "city," and that Hebrew *ʿîr* and *qiryāh* both denote what the English word "town" means, literally, the physical plant or structure of the place.

28. *For fire blazed from Heshbon. It consumed Ar of Moab,* Bamoth-Baal-on-Arnon.

The simple tenses of the parallel verbs, *yāṣeʾāh//ʾākelāh*, presented without a projected sequence of tenses and without utilization of the conversive *waw*, testify to the relative antiquity of the present poem. Contrast the later restatement of the Heshbon theme in Jeremiah 48:45, where the conversive *waw* sets up the usual sequence of tenses:

kî ʾēš yāṣaʿ mēḥešbôn, welehābāh mibbên(!) Sîḥôn
wattōʾkal peʾat Môʾāb—

For fire blazed forth from Heshbon,
And a flame from Sihon's *palace* (read: *mibbêt*)
And it consumed the edge of Moab—

In early biblical poetry, use of the conversive *waw* was rare, but in the course of time it penetrated Hebrew poetry under the influence of the scribal schools. Its home is in the style of annals and chronicles, not originally in poetry (Levine 1978). The Hebrew *qiryāh* (also: *qeret*) usually designates a walled, or fortified city (Deut 2:3, 3:4, 36, Isa 25:2), and has cognates in Ugaritic, Aramaic and Phoenician-Punic. The parallelism of *ʿîr//qiryāh* is also well known (Isa 1:26, 22:2, 25:2). It is therefore doubtful if v 28 is of another hand, as suggested by Weippert (1979), especially if this determination is based solely on the face that *qiryāh* is used instead of *ʿîr*.

In the second stich (Num 21:28b) Masoretic *baʿalê bāmôt ʾArnōn* has usually been regarded as problematic. It could be translated "The masters of Bamoth on the Arnon," a site by the name of Bamoth having been mentioned in Numbers 21:19–20. The Bible elsewhere refers to *baʿalê Yerîḥô* (Jos 24:11), and *baʿalê Šekem* (Judg 9:23–26, 39), so this reading is possible. And yet, the very mention in Numbers 22:41 of a site named *Bāmôt Baʿal* suggests reading here *Bamôt Baʿal ʾArnôn* "Bamoth Baal-on-Arnon." It is more reasonable to say that fire consumed towns and buildings than to say that it consumed leaders of the citizenry. It has also been suggested, following the Septuagint, which reads *kaì katépien* "and they swallowed," that Masoretic *baʿalê* secretes a verb, by metathesis, either *bāleʿāh*, or the Piel *billeʿāh* "swallowed up." The parallelism of *ʾ-k-l//b-l-ʿ* is attested in Jeremiah 51:34. Note, as well, that the verb *b-l-ʿ* may be applied to the destruction of cities and palaces in Isaiah 25:5–7, Lament 2:2, 5. On balance, however, it is preferable to read *Bāmôt-Baʿal*, because a site by this name is mentioned in Numbers 22:41, after we had read a few verses earlier, in Numbers 22:36, that Balaam and Balak had just arrived at the Arnon on the Moabite border. In fact the Bamoth mentioned earlier, in Numbers 21:19–20, is probably the same place.

Num 21:28 could be taken to mean that after Sihon had fortified his capital at Heshbon he proceeded to move southward through Moabite territory, from Heshbon to Dibon, near Medeba. This is undoubtedly how the redactor who interpolated Numbers 21:26 wanted the reader to understand the ballad. If, however, the reference to Heshbon as Sihon's city is retrospective, as has been suggested here (and see the Comments), then Numbers 21:28–30 are describing Moab's devastation as emanating from Heshbon. The devastator need not have been Sihon himself, but rather the Israelites based at Heshbon. They produced the fire that issued forth from Heshbon. In biblical diction, fire "issues forth, blazes" (the Hebrew verb *y-ṣ-ʾ*) from its source, and consumes (the Hebrew verb *ʾ-k-l*) all that it contacts. Thus, in the words of Jotham's parable, the thornbush admonishes those who would appoint him king:

> "If you truly wish to anoint me as king over you, come take shelter under my protection; but if not—fire shall issue forth from the thornbush, and it shall consume the cedars of Lebanon" (Judg 9:15, and cf. Judg 9:20, where the parable is applied).

29. *Woe unto you, Moab! You have vanished, people of Kemosh!*

We have here the well-known call to lamentation, cf. Jeremiah 48:46, in a rephrasing of the present oracle, and also Jer 13:27: *ʾôy lāk Yerušālayim* "Woe unto you, Jerusalem!" Frequently, the lachrymose reference is to the speaker or speakers themselves (1 Sam 4:7–8, Isa 6:5). The Moabites are addressed by the Israelite poet as *ʿam Kemôš* "the people of Kemosh" (cf. Jer 48:46), just as the Israelites are known to themselves as *ʿam YHWH* (Exod 15:16, Judg 5:11). And yet, we find in the Hebrew Bible no other example of a non-Israelite people designated in this way. Kemosh is the national god of the Moabites, as is evidenced by 1 Kings 11:7, and by the Mesha Stele (Gibson 1971:74, line 14, and following), where the Moabite king states that Kemosh commanded him to do battle with the Israelites and to retake territories that had been lost to him. The theophoric name of Mesha's father is *kmšyt[n]* "Kemosh has granted."

The Hebrew *ʾābadta ʿam Kemôš* has been rendered: "You have vanished, oh people of Kemosh," rather than "You have perished." It turns out that the Hebrew verb *ʾ-b-d* enjoys a broad semantic range, and may connote both reversible and irreversible loss; exile and deportation, on the one hand, and extinction, on the other. Thus, *ʾArammî ʾōbēd ʾābî* in Deuteronomy 26:5 is best rendered "My father was a fugitive Aramean," there being no reference to his death intended. Similarly, in Isaiah 27:13: *ûbāʾû hāʾōbedîm beʾeres ʾAššûr* is to be translated: "The fugitives in the land of Assyria shall return," in parallelism with *wehanniddāḥîm beʾereṣ Mišrayim* "the deportees in the land of Egypt." Similarly, in 1 Samuel 9:3, 20 we read of Saul's asses who were lost, certainly not dead, since he later retrieved them, and yet this situation is conveyed by various forms of the verb *ʾ-b-d (wattōʾbadnāh, hāʾōbedôt)*. In the present poem, we go on to read of Moab's captivity and deportation, not of its extinction. Numbers 21:30, according to the reading suggested here, which directly follows, reinforces this theme: "Their posterity has vanished." The range of connotations attested for the Hebrew verb *ʾ-b-d* suggests a cognate relationship with Akkadian *abātu* B, essentially a stative verb meaning "to flee, disappear, vanish" (Levine 1995).

His sons were delivered as fugitives, his daughters into captivity.

>To the Amorite king, Sihon<

The Hebrew *pālîṭ*, plural *pelêṭîm* "fugitive, fugitives," derives from a verb meaning "to usher forth, emit," and in the active stems "to extricate, rescue" (Ps 18:3, 49, 40:18), and usually refers to those who escape battle or siege. The form *šebît* "captivity," employed here (also *šebût*), elsewhere occurs consistently as part of the cognate phrase: *šāb šebût/šĕbît*, "to restore the captivity," a theme particularly favored by Jeremiah (30:3, 18, but cf. Hos 6:11, Amos 9:14). More frequent forms are *šebî* and feminine *šibyāh*. One would have expected *lemelek hāʾEmôrî, Sîḥôn* "to the king of the Amorites, Sihon," rather than *lemelek ʾEmōr̂i*, without the definite article. It has been suggested by several scholars that these three words are not original to the poem, because they interrupt the flow, and disrupt the meter of the verse. Consider the balance of the verses without the words *lemelek ʾEmōr̂i Ṣîḥôn*, anticipating the proposed reading of Numbers 21:30 to be explained presently:

ʾÔy lekā Môāb   *ʾābadta ʿam Kemôš*
nātan bānāw pelêṭîm   *ûbenōtāw baššebît*
wenînām ʾābad   *Ȟešbôn ʿad Dîbôn*
wenāšamû ʿad Nōpaḥ   *ʾašer ʿad Mêdebāʾ*

In the Comments it will be explained that, in adding these words, a redactor made it explicit that Sihon was the captor of the Moabites, thereby assuring that the ballad would be understood as celebrating Sihon's conquest of Moab.

30. Their posterity *has vanished.* As vocalized by the Masoretes, *wannîrām* is a conversive form of the verb *y-r-h* "to cast, hurl" (Exod 15:4), to be rendered "We hurled them to extinction," reading infinitive construct *ʾabōd,* instead of finite perfect *ʾābad* (thus *NJPS*). The Masoretic reading implies that "we" refers to the Israelites, which would be in line with the interpretation proposed here, were it not for the strangeness of this reading. Some have regarded Numbers 21:30 as an interpolation. Conversely, others have taken Numbers 21:30, in its Masoretic version, as indicating precisely that the Israelites are the conquerors, leaving unresolved just how Numbers 21:29b figures in the interpretation of the Heshbon Ballad. There is, however, another approach to the exegesis of Numbers 21:30. If we predicate a noun instead of a verb, we have, first of all, eliminated a conversive verbal form, which is unusual in early Hebrew poetry. Furthermore, two possibilities emerge that would allow retention of the Masoretic consonantal text: (a) *wenîrām ʾābad* "their cultivation perished," from the Hebrew (and Aramaic) *nîr* "newly ploughed field" (Jer 4:3), and Tosefta, *Menāḥôt* 9:3; and (b) *wenîrām ʾābad* "their domination is ended," cognate with Aramaic *nîr,* Akkadian *nīru* "yoke" (CAD N:260). The former suggestion has the advantage of projecting a certain symmetry in the parallelism: Cultivated fields existed no longer and there was devastation, a theme conveyed by a form of the verb *š-m-m* "to be desolate" in the parallel stich. And yet a minor emendation that has understandably occurred to others, and is reflected in the translation, would yield: *wenînām ʾābad* "their posterity vanished." The Hebrew *nîn* means "descendant" in Genesis 21:23, Isaiah 14:22.

As vocalized, Masoretic *wannassîm* means "We laid waste," producing, once again, a conversive verbal form. It is also strange that there is no object provided for the Hiphil, since it generates active-transitive force. Perhaps read: *wenāšam[û]* "They (= the Moabites) were desolate," predicating a third plural Niphal form of the verb *š-m-m* that is occasionally applied to persons (Lament 4:5, Ezek 4:17, 30:7). The internal *yod* of the Masoretes may be a misplaced, final *waw.* Whereas Nophah (perhaps Nobah of Num 32: 42?) is unidentified, both Dibon and Medeba are well-known sites, whose historical importance will be reviewed in the Comments to Numbers 21. The relative *ʾašer* "that, which" has been translated in a manner similar to Akkadian *ašar,* that often means "where" (see above, in Num 21:14). This concludes the ballad, and we return to the chronicle of the JE writers.

* * *

31. *The Israelites settled in the land of the Amorites.* This verse repeats what was said above in Numbers 21:25, once again accounting for the origins of the Israelite community in Transjordan.

32. *Then Moses dispatched [men] to scout Jazer.* Here we have a brief report on the capture of Jazer, on the Ammonite border, then said to be inhabited by Amorites. The Ammonites were avoided by the Israelites because their border was strongly fortified (Num 21:24), but it would seem that the JE historiographers knew of Jazer as lying outside Ammonite jurisdiction. Jazer is a well-known site (Num 32:1, 3, 33, Jos 13:25, 21:37, 2 Sam 24:5), and is elsewhere mentioned in laments over Moab (Isa 16:8–9, Jos 13:25, 21:37, 2 Sam 24:5).

33. *Then they turned northward by way of the Bashan.* This is an area consistently designated in the determinate state. The Bashan was the fertile area of Transjordan north of Gilead, or, if you will, north of the Yarmuk river and east of the Sea of Galilee (*Kinneret*). It reached to the Hermon, possibly to Jebel Druze (Map 1). The Hebrew *derek habbāšān* "the way toward the Bashan" typifies the formulation of directions in biblical literature. One speaks of taking the road that leads to a named site or area, cf. *derek ʿēber hayyardēn* "the way [leading to] Transjordan (Isa 8:23).

Og, the king of the Bashan, came out to face them

The name Og is of uncertain meaning, but is assumed to be non-Semitic in derivation. Biblical *ʾEdreʿî* (Arabic Deraʿ) is located in northeastern Transjordan, southeast of Ashtaroth, and is often mentioned in connection with it (Deut 1:4, 3:1, 10, Jos 12:4, 13:12, 31, 37).

34–35. *Have no fear of him.* Using the frequent formula *ʾal tîrāʾ* "Do not fear," YHWH assures Moses that his victory over Og, king of the Bashan, will be as complete as his victory over Sihon, king of the Amorites. This statement appears virtually verbatim in Deuteronomy 3:2–3, and a similar formulation is found in Joshua 8:22, 11:8, in accounts that resonate with Deuteronomic diction.

until no survivor was left to him

The Hebrew *ʿad biltî hišʾîr lô śārîd,* prepositional *ʿad* + the negative conjunction followed by the infinitive construct, is proverbial (cf. 2 Kings 10:11). The more frequent fixed construction is: *lebiltî* + infinitive construct.

22:1 *The Israelites marched on, and encamped in the Plains of Moab, across* *the Jordan from Jericho.* The Hebrew *ʿarābāh,* plural *ʿarābôt,* are ambiguous in their meanings, and are variously rendered "plains." They customarily appear together with *midbār* "steppe, desert" and *ṣiyyāh* "wasteland" (Jer 2:6, 51:43) but, as is true of the Hebrew *midbār,* it is unclear, in each case, how arid and untended *ʿarābôt* actually were. West of the Jordan, at the northern extent of the Dead Sea, lay *ʿarbôt Yerîḥô* "the Plains of Jericho" (Jos 5:10, 2 Kings 25:5, Jer 39:5, 52:8), and facing it, to the east of the Jordan, lay *ʿarbōt Môʾāb,* a term peculiar to priestly writers (Num 26:3, 63, 31:12, 33:48–50, 35:1, 36:13, Deut 34:1, Jos 13:32; see Aharoni 1993:48–49, maps 52–53). Both of these flat areas, located near the mouth of Jordan river north of the Dead Sea, have trees and are well watered. Hence: "the Plains of Moab." The construct formation *Yardēn Yerēḥô* refers to the stretch of river that flows in the vicinity of Jericho.

COMMENTS

It would be hard to conceive of a single chapter of the Hebrew Bible that poses more complex historical and literary problems than Numbers 21. Within Torah literature, this chapter serves as a major historiographic link in the transition to the Transjordanian phase of the Israelite march to the Promised Land. After a brief account in Numbers 21:1–3 of a battle at Hormah, somewhere in the Negeb, Numbers 21:4–35 shift to Transjordan. The Transjordanian experience pervades Numbers 21–36, as a whole, and this subject is also of major concern in Deuteronomy 1–3, where an alternative view of the Transjordanian phase is presented. It will be important to compare these two sources with each other. At stake are the tradition history of the Israelite communities of Transjordan and the ideology of the relations between the kingdoms of northern Israel and Judah with the Transjordanian peoples. The JE historiographers of Numbers 21, who drew heavily on the work of the Elohist, cited the Heshbon Ballad and two poetic excerpts as proof texts of Israelite claims to areas of Transjordan. In and of themselves, these poems present serious exegetical and interpretive problems, while at the same time holding out potential insights of great value on the significance attributed to the Transjordanian experience by diverse biblical writers. The Comments will first center on Numbers 21:4–35, and then return to a discussion of the battle at Hormah (Num 21:1–3), which, for all of its brevity, raises subtle problems of textual placement and historicity. The Comments will conclude with an effort to identify the *Sitz-im-Leben* of Numbers 21 in all of its parts.

It is the unit comprising Numbers 21:4–35 that is of the broadest historical interest, and poses the most complex problems of interpretation. Let us once again summarize what Numbers 21:4–35, as we have them, relate in substance: We read that the Israelites proceeded northward through the deserts of eastern

Transjordan after leaving Kadesh Barnea, arriving at the Arnon, which represented the northern border of Moab. This point of arrival is pinpointed and confirmed by two citations from epic poetry. The Israelites then requested passage from Sihon, the Amorite king, and after being refused, confronted his forces at Jahaz, located north of the Arnon on the eastern frontier. In a major battle, the Israelites were victorious, and seized Sihon's land from the Arnon in the south to the Jabbok in the north. At this point, Numbers 21:25 records that the Israelites occupied all of the Amorite cities, including Heshbon and its dependencies, and settled in them. Virtually in the manner of a gloss, Numbers 21:26 explains that Heshbon had belonged to a former Moabite king, but had been taken from him by Sihon long before the time of the Israelite advance. This is confirmed by a ballad (Num 21:27–30) referring to Heshbon as Sihon's capital.

As cited in the narrative context of Numbers 21, the ballad would seem to celebrate Sihon's capture of we are calling North Moab; namely, the area from Dibon in the south, located just north of the Arnon river, to Heshbon in the north. It is Sihon who took the Moabites captive (Num 21:29b). As was explained in Notes to Numbers 21:29, it is likely, however, that the reference to Sihon, the Amorite king, as the captor of the Moabites in Numbers 21:29b was interpolated. It will be explained in the Comments that the original intent of the ballad's author was to celebrate an Israelite, not an Amorite, conquest of North Moab. References in the ballad to Heshbon as Sihon's capital are merely retrospective; the actual concern of the ballad is with the devastation of Moab by Israelite forces whose home base was Heshbon. This proposed *Sitz-im-Leben* would help to explain the seemingly puzzling preoccupation with Moab in the ballad, whereas the narrative context of Numbers 21 has as its primary agenda the Israelite defeat of the Amorites.

The prose narrative resumes in Numbers 21:31 by repeating that the Israelites settled Amorite territory. After proper reconnaissance, they also captured Jazer, north of Heshbon on the Ammonite border, and deported its then Amorite inhabitants. The chapter concludes with the Bashan campaign against Og in the north. Finally, the Israelites arrive at the Jordan, in the Plains of Moab facing Jericho (Num 22:1), after having secured the territory north of the Arnon. In effect, Numbers 21:21–35 provide a record tracing the origins of the Israelite society in Transjordan to the lifetime of Moses, after the Exodus from Egypt.

The tasks of biblical scholarship in attempting to make historical sense out of Numbers 21 are manifold, and it will be necessary to read Numbers 21 in several dimensions. D. N. Freedman (1980) has set down criteria for the historical interpretation of early Hebrew poetry that may be of use in dealing with historiography, as well. He identifies at least two discrete dimensions to be differentiated: (a) The time when the poem was most likely composed and the *Sitz-im-Leben* or agenda of its author(s); and (b) The earlier period to which the poem refers historically; the situation it purports to describe. With respect to both biblical poetry and biblical historiography there is a third corollary factor to be evaluated: To what degree does the characterization of the period of reference accord with the historical evidence available for the period in question? To put it another way: Does the given characterization have an historical basis, or is it merely an imagining of the past? The interpretation of Numbers 21 should begin with a consideration of this question. We begin with some geographical information about ancient Moab.

COMMENT 1: THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND OF NUMBERS 21

There have been several important surveys of Transjordan in recent decades, as well as extensive archaeological excavations at specific, biblical and non-biblical sites. Much has been learned about the climate, topography and economic history of the area. The most prominent of these surveys is known as the Madaba Plains Project. With regard to the land of Moab, biblical traditions usually differentiate between Moab proper, a plateau of about one thousand meter elevation, lying between the Arnon (wadi el-Mujib) in the North and the Zered Gorge (wadi el-Hesa) in the South; the Dead Sea on the west and the Arabian desert to the east. The soil of this plateau supported both agriculture and pastoral grazing in antiquity. Moab north of the Arnon was, however, more accessible to the larger, surrounding environment, and was better known to biblical writers. In Deuteronomy 3:10 this area was called *hamm̂ĭsôr* "the plain, plateau" (or "tableland") lying south of Gilead (Deut 4:43, Jos 13:9, Jer 48:21). Its principal town was Medeba (variously written Madaba), but we also read of Heshbon, Elaleh, Jahaz, Nebo, Dibon, and other towns (Num 32:3, 21–24; J. M. Miller 1992, in *ABD* IV:882–893, and bibliography cited).

The narratives of Numbers 21, the poetic excerpts in Numbers 21:14–15, 17–18, and the Heshbon Ballad (Num 21:27–30) speak only of this area, the area we are calling North Moab. There is no explicit indication that the land of Moab south of the Arnon was at issue. The only possible sign of concern with Moabite territory lying to the south of the Arnon between the Zered Gorge and the Arnon are the poetic references to *ʿĀr (Mô'āb)* in Numbers 21:15, 25. This would be so only if unidentified Ar (*ʿĀr*), a word that may simply mean "town," like Hebrew *ʿîr*, was located south of the Arnon. But, according to Deuteronomy 2:17, Ar marked the northern border of Moab, and immediately preceding that reference, in Deuteronomy 2:9–16, we read that the Israelites skirted Moab and then arrived at Ar, where they were given instructions about the Ammonites living north of the Arnon. It is at this point that Deuteronomy 2:24, and following, introduce the Amorites.

Admittedly, it is puzzling to read in Deuteronomy 2:29 that the Moabites dwelling in Ar, like the Edomites living in Seir, had provided the Israelites with food and water. This seems to indicate that Ar was part of Moab proper, not of North Moab. It is likely, however, that Deuteronomy 2:29 is a gloss, and in any event, it is an ideological statement. Weippert (1979) notes the parallelism of *ʿĀr* and *Qîr Môʾāb* in the lament of Isaiah 15:1, which might suggest a location south of the Arnon, but concludes, nonetheless, that Ar should be located at the Arnon, not in the area south of it. In fact, the poetic citation in Numbers 21:15 clearly locates "the settlement of Ar" (*šebeṭ ʿĀr*) at the Moabite border just north of the Arnon. This is, after all, the very point of the citation (see Notes to Num 21:14b–15). What the geographical data indicate is that the dispute over Moabite claims that is reflected in Numbers 21 concerned only Moab north of the Arnon. It remains to explain why this jurisdictional argument was so important to the authors and compilers of Numbers 21.

COMMENT 2: HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to internal biblical chronology, which is to say, the reported events as they were dated by the biblical writers themselves, all that Numbers 21 records would have transpired in the thirty-ninth and fortieth years after the Exodus from Egypt. Assuming for the purposes of discussion that the Exodus was an historical event, and that the forty years of the Wilderness Period represented an actual though perhaps schematized time frame, the Israelite advance through Transjordan would have occurred in the late Bronze Age to early Iron Age; more precisely, in the late thirteenth or early twelfth century B.C.E. On this basis, one would have expected to find archaeological remains of an earlier fortified town at Tell Hesban/Heshbon, a heavily excavated site, dating to this period of time. It will be proposed in these Comments, on archaeological and other grounds, that we would do well to lower the chronology by a century or more to the eleventh century B.C.E. In that case, remains of a fortified town that could have served as Sihon's capital should have been found dating from the late twelfth to early eleventh century B.C.E.

The site of Heshbon has been precisely identified since late antiquity, and continuous references to it abound ever since. Tell Hesban is located forty-five kilometers north of the Arnon (wadi Mujib), twenty-five kilometers east of the Jordan, and twelve kilometers north of Medeba. The ruins of Heshbon are found on two hills, overlooking two small valleys that encompass the mound on three sides. Protracted archaeological excavations from Tell Hesban, conducted primarily by archaeologists from Andrews University between 1968 and 1978, failed to uncover significant architectural remains at the site that could be dated as early as 1200–1000 B.C.E., Iron Age IA, not to speak of the absence of structural remains of the preceding late Bronze period. In fact, very little was found at the site to indicate urbanization until the tenth or even the ninth century B.C.E. If by fortifications we mean city walls, then none have been discovered in the relevant period, although smaller structures perhaps best classified as small forts built to guard estates have been found. Forts of this type were often placed on hilltops, and have been uncovered in the Amman region dating to the late Bronze or Iron I periods. Examples come from Jebel el-Teweim, Khirbet el-ʿEdmah, and Rujm Madbaʾa, and elʾ Mabrak. They would appear to represent the first phases of sedentarization. Such a fortified estate may have existed at Heshbon in Iron Age I, beginning in the early twelfth century B.C.E., based on the ceramic remains that have been found on the site that date to this period.

Problems affecting the historicity of Numbers 21 and its references to Heshbon constituted a crux of biblical historiography in earlier generations, and have attracted renewed scholarly attention, generating a multiplicity of proposed resolutions to a classic lack of correlation between archaeological and textual evidence. Lawrence Geraty's summary of the stratigraphy of tell Hesban from excavation reports (Geraty 1992, in *ABD* III:181–184; Geraty 1993, in *NEAE* II:626–630) informs us that stratum 17 at the site yielded evidence of the initial construction of a massive water reservoir. Geraty dates this stratum to the ninth to eighth century B.C.E. More recently, James Sauer (1994) has argued for a tenth century B.C.E. date for the reservoir on the basis of ceramic evidence. We may infer, therefore, that beginning sometime in the tenth or ninth century B.C.E. Heshbon was a sizable town, although virtually all that was left of it, except for the remains of the reservoir and its related structural network, was an immense amount of debris. The reservoir remained in use down to the sixth century B.C.E. This may well be the reservoir alluded to in the Song of Songs (7:5) as *berēkôt beḥešbôn* "pools in Heshbon." It is interesting that Mesha, the Moabite king of the ninth century B.C.E., records that he built reservoirs (the Moabite term for reservoir is *ʾšwḥ*) in two other towns of North Moab. The jurisdictional status of Heshbon changed over the course of several centuries. Heshbon may have been built by Israelites, as we shall see, but the period of its greatest prominence was as an Ammonite town, represented by stratum 16, that dates from the middle of the seventh into the sixth century B.C.E.

Canaan and Transjordan at the end of the late Bronze and at the beginning of the Iron Age were host countries to various foreign groups, among them North Syrians of varying identities. Mendenhall suggests that this is what Ezekiel (16:2–3) may have had in mind when he taunted Jerusalem personified, saying that her father was an Amorite and her mother a Hittite, both probable references to the early presence of North Syrians in that city. Others before Mendenhall had postulated a possible link between the demise of the New Hittite empire and the establishment of the Amorite kingdom of Transjordan. This means that Numbers 21 may have an historical core, after all. It may be that certain Israelites settled a land area north of the Arnon and west of what was later to constitute the Ammonite border, one that had been occupied by the Amorites at the beginning of the Iron Age. As suggested earlier, the Amorites may have built the fortifications uncovered at Tell el-'Umeiri. If we allow that the Israelite settlement of Transjordan occurred a century or more later than traditionally thought, shall we say, during the early eleventh century B.C.E., there would be little problem in allowing for a prior Amorite occupation of the same area, earlier on in the Iron I period, in the twelfth century B.C.E.

Having gone as far as historical evidence allows in identifying the Amorites of Transjordan, we ought now to review the available evidence on the Israelite settlement of the Transjordanian region north of the Arnon, in what we have been referring to as North Moab. Martin Noth (1940/41) has offered some keen observations on reading Numbers 21 with this question in mind, and his guidelines have been followed by other scholars. He speaks of this chapter as exemplifying the "all Israelite" tendency in biblical narrative. By this he meant that tribal histories and local records were recast as the collective history of the Israelites. In Numbers 21 we read how "the people" (Hebrew *hā'ām*) or "the Israelites" (*bĕnê Yiśrā'ēl*) advanced through Transjordan. In historical fact, these ventures were initiated by one or more tribes, in this case by the tribe of Gad. In all probability, we can also assign a role to the tribe of Reuben, and to the Machirite and Yairite clans affiliated with Manasseh in the Israelite settlement of Transjordan. This is the main difference between some of the reports preserved in Numbers 32 (especially verses 32:34–42), which speak of particular tribes settling specific areas, and the chronicle of Numbers 21, which speaks of the entire people of Israel acting as one.

The question then poses itself as to the nature of the historical evidence we possess bearing on the early settlement of North Moab by the Gadites and others. We have, in the first instance, a variety of mainline biblical traditions placing the tribe of Gad in Transjordan, south of Gilead, most notably those of Numbers 32, already mentioned, and Deuteronomy 3 and Joshua 13. Is there also extra-biblical evidence of Gadite settlement in Transjordan, datable to an early period? Karl Heinz Bernhardt (1982) has provided an informative discussion of the political situation in Transjordan during the period of Mesha, the Moabite king, in the mid-ninth century B.C.E. with attention to 2 Kings 3 (also see P. Stern 1993; Cogan-Tadmor 1988:40–52). Most relevant to the present discussion are his observations on the historical references in the Mesha Stele pertaining to the northern Israelite kingdom after 926 B.C.E. Mesha Stele (lines 4–5) says of Omri (who reigned 882–871, according to Bernhardt's chronology) that when Omri was king over Israel he subjugated Moab for many years. This anticipatory statement is then followed, a line or two later, by a more specific one to the effect that Omri seized (the verb *y-r-š*) the open country around Medeba and settled it (the verb *y-š-b*). By way of recapitulation, the Mesha Stele further records that the king of Israel had fortified Jahaz. Finally, we read in lines 14 of the stela and following that Mesha occupied the town of Nebo "belonging to Israel (*ʿl Yśrʾl*)." An almost certain restoration of the text further allows us to read of cultic vessels taken from a temple to YHWH located in Nebo. What Bernhardt and before him Weippert (1979) have noted is that the Mesha Stele actually records two stages of development in the history of the area of Ataroth. There is, representing the former phase, a retrospective reference to the Gadites:

> *wʾš Gd yšb bʾrṣ ʿṭrt mʿlm wybn lh mlk Yśrʾl ʾt ʿṭrt*
>
> "The people of Gad were settled in the hinterland of Ataroth longer than anyone can remember, and the king of Israel fortified Ataroth for himself" (Gibson 1971:74; Mesha Stele, line 10).

This amounts to a parenthetical statement on the origins of the Gadite settlement around Ataroth, a town in the western region of the Moabite Tableland. The Gadites, we are told, lived there long before the fortification of that town by Omri, or his successor, whose conquests are the principal subject of Mesha's annal at this point. In fact, the idiom *yšb mʿlm* "from time immemorial, longer than anyone can remember," in the above citation is represented in biblical diction, where it is similarly employed to record age-old settlement in a given area. Thus, Joshua 24:2:

> In Cis-Euphrates (*beʿēber hannāhār*) were your ancestors settled from time immemorial (*yašebû ʾabôtêkem mē ʿôlām*); Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor.

Or, 1 Samuel 27:8:

> David and his forces went to war and deployed against the peoples of Geshur, the residents of Gezer, and the Amalekites, for these are the

> ones who were settled in the land from time immemorial (*kî hēnāh yōšebôt hāʾāreṣ mē̆ʿôlām*), at the approaches to Shur, all the way to the land of Egypt.

It remains unclear just how long a period of time the adverbial *mē̆ʿôlām* projects. Nonetheless, Moabite *mʿlm*/Hebrew *mē̆ʿôlām* qualifies as a genuine chronological indicator, used by annalists and chroniclers in assigning certain events and realities to a time frame long preceding current or recent developments. Since, as Bernhardt emphasized, Mesha's review of the background of his own conquests and fortifications covers the period in the early ninth century B.C.E. when Omri began his subjugation of Moab, *mʿlm* must refer to an earlier period, perhaps to the period of the United Monarchy in the tenth century B.C.E. or even earlier, to the eleventh century B.C.E.

In the last of a series of studies and reports on Transjordan, Nelson Glueck (1970) summarized his conclusions that there was a pervasive gap in sedentarization throughout the Moabite Tableland from ca. 1800 B.C.E. to the late thirteenth century B.C.E. This view is no longer thought to be tenable, even though some sites actually exhibit such a gap. Archaeological activity in the form of actual excavations and extensive surveys has yielded considerable evidence of village settlement in this area of Transjordan before the beginning of the Iron Age, showing a cyclic pattern of nomadization and sedentarization over centuries. As a result, the long-range view of the history of the Heshbon area has changed. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the excavations at Tell Hesban, after hitting bedrock, did not yield any clear evidence of a walled town at the site during the late Bronze Age or early Iron Age, such as is predicated by the ballad of Numbers 21:27–30, and in JE historiography generally.

The first response to this finding on the part of the archaeologists who had excavated Tell Hesban, led by Siegfried Horn of Andrews University, was not to question the historical accuracy of the internal biblical chronology, or to attempt to fathom the minds of biblical poets and historiographers. Rather, the archaeologists of Tell Hesban went looking for biblical Heshbon elsewhere in the immediate area. Given the fact that toponyms tend to drift slightly, it sometimes happens that their precise identification becomes confused over the centuries. Thus, ancient Kadesh (Barnea) is not located at Ain Qudeis, that bears its name, but at Ain Qudeirat, located nearby (Levine 1993:90). In a similar way, some archaeologists thought it possible that another site in the immediate vicinity of Tell Hesban might qualify as the original Heshbon referred to in Numbers 21. The first candidate was Tell Jalul, which had been suggested as an alternative possibility for the location of ancient Heshbon by Siegfreid Horn (1982). It is now recognized as the second largest tell in the Madaba Plains, covering an area of about 7.5 hectares. The tell of ancient Madaba was probably larger. Excavations at Tell Jalul by Andrews University resumed in 1992, directed by Randall Younker. One must be cautious in assessing the results, since continuing excavations in 1994 turned up a substantial wall of an Iron I building, and there is a tremendous destruction level nearly one meter thick lying immediately under the earliest Iron II level. It is full of Iron I pottery, indicating large construction in the preceding Iron I phase. Nevertheless, survey trends show clearly that the Iron II period, beginning in the late tenth or early ninth centuries, was the time of greatest urbanization and fortification at Tell Jalul (Younker 1992; 1996, personal communication).

Beginning in 1989, the Madaba Plains Project undertook six seasons of excavations at nearby Tell el-'Umeiri, located in the hills south of Amman, on the road near the airport under the direction of L. Herr (1998). Tell el-'Umeiri can not be identified as biblical Heshbon, and yet it surprised its excavators by yielding some of the most extensive fortifications known thus far from early Iron Age I, datable to the twelfth century B.C.E., either in Canaan or Transjordan. It was a large fortified town, larger than the highland villages, and comparable to Shechem in the contemporary period. What probably represents a massive casemate wall system was found immediately above the Middle Bronze II C rampart. Evidence of a violent destruction sometime in the Iron I period (twelfth to tenth centuries B.C.E.) was discovered in several areas of the tell. These finds hold out the distinct possibility that other tells in the immediate region may also yield early Iron I remains indicative of urbanization. The entire picture of the area is thus changing in a basic way. In light of the evidence from areas currently undergoing excavation, it appears likely that Heshbon served later biblical writers as an epitome, because in their own time these writers knew it to be the major town in the area. If we do not insist on the literal accuracy of the biblical record and of its internal chronology, we can, thanks to the evidence from Tell el-'Umeiri, confirm the existence of at least one large fortified town east of the Dead Sea and south of Pella and Amman, in the early twelfth century B.C.E. and there were probably others.

It is likely that Heshbon is one of several, named towns for which biblical historiographers (and poets) created a literary prehistory. The somewhat similar historical problem created by the Kadesh traditions of Numbers 13 and 20 was discussed at considerable length in Levine 1993:53–56. On independent grounds, biblical Kadesh has been identified as Ain Qudeirat, south of Beer Sheba. And yet, recent excavations at that site, conducted by Rudolph Cohen, hit bedrock in the tenth century B.C.E., which means that at the time the Israelites were supposed to have encamped at Kadesh no fortress or town stood at the site. We are compelled to conclude that a later biblical writer, knowing of Kadesh as part of a network of fortifications constructed during the United Monarchy, or at a later time, projected the existence of that town into the earlier period of his chronology because of its appropriateness for the story he was telling. Now that a brief article has been published by A. Ofer (1993, in

NEAE:607–609) on the limited archaeological excavations at Jebel Rumeidah, ancient Hebron, it is possible to understand the curious chronological notation in Numbers 13:22 about that town's history better than before:

> They proceeded northward through the Negeb, arriving at Hebron. Ahiman, Seshai and Talmai, born of the Anakites, were there. (Hebron had been built seven years before Tanis, in Egypt.)

In Levine 1993:354–355, 372–375, it was explained that physical evidence was discovered at the site of ancient Tanis showing that statues and other artifacts of the Ramesside period had intentionally been transported to Tanis during the later Saitic period in a concerted effort to create a prehistory for that town, so as to enhance its status. The fact is that Tanis was actually founded as the Saitic capital only in the 11th century B.C.E. The notation in Numbers 13:22 reflects the later perception, and although historically inaccurate, it is fascinating for its association of the chronology of Tanis with that of Hebron, since the Hebron chronology also represents an instance of what may be termed "historiographic refraction," the process that ultimately explains the Heshbon tradition itself. Initial surveys and excavations at Jebel Rumeidah indicate that Hebron was abandoned in the late Bronze Age, and rebuilt as a Judean city in the Iron Age. To quote A. Ofer, the excavator (1993, in *NEAE* II:606–609):

> Judging from the finds, it is unlikely that Hebron was a fortified town on the eve of the Israelite settlement. This detail in the Calebite tradition is probably etiological, a conjecture on the part of a late writer who was probably familiar with the ancient cyclopean walls of Hebron . . . In fact, parts of these walls are still visible on the mound; in the Iron Age they rose to an even greater height and were probably a familiar sight and may well have been reused.

Although the Hebron account is hardly just "a detail in the Calebite tradition," Ofer's interpretation, though offered somewhat reluctantly, is essentially correct. In the case of Hebron/Jebel Rumeidah there was an awareness during the Iron Age that a great city had stood on the site in the past, but later observers might not have had knowledge of the historical gap in its habitation. Perhaps biblical historiographers simply filled in the gap, and assumed that a town had always stood there. The same is true in the case of Jericho/Tell es-Sulṭan, with some differences (H. and M. Weippert 1976). In the case of Kadesh, however, there was no physical evidence to suggest that this town had stood on the tell in the distant past. In that instance, the extent of projection was far greater; the prehistory of the site was entirely literary. The Heshbon tradition must be understood somewhat differently. Even with the adoption of a lower chronology than the one projected in Torah historiography, the archaeological evidence does not allow for the conclusion that in the twelfth century, in the Iron IA period, a fortified capital town such as is portrayed in the Heshban Ballad stood on Tell Hesban.

Reviewing the extensive literature on the historical problem of the Heshbon traditions of Numbers 21, and studying the reports of surveys and excavations at the site of Tell Hesban and in its immediate area, one is struck by the extent to which verification of the biblical record seems to have been the primary consideration for archaeologists who first undertook to discover its remains. This mentality has greatly changed in recent years, as historical reconstruction has become the primary objective. A balanced view, based on recent modifications of the archaeological record as correlated with textual analysis, might be formulated as follows: The Heshbon traditions of Numbers 21 are historically imprecise, based on what has been learned as a result of protracted archaeological excavations at the site of Tell Hesban. Nevertheless, more recent excavations in the nearby area have revealed at Tell el-'Umeiri, and may soon uncover at other sites, massive construction during the early Iron I period of the twelfth century B.C.E. A town like the one that stood at Tell el-'Umeiri may have been the capital of an Amorite kingdom, or constituted an Amorite city-state. The next task is to identify those Amorites of Transjordan whose king, Sihon, did battle with the Israelites. Do we possess any historical evidence of the presence of Amorites in Transjordan during the early Iron I period?

Even allowing for the likelihood that biblical ethnographic nomenclature is not fully consistent, it is highly improbable that the Amorites referred to anywhere in biblical literature were one of the known Transjordanian peoples—Edomites, Ammonites or Moabites. Nor can we regard the ethnonym *hā'emōrî* as merely a general term for all inhabitants of Canaan, as J. van Seters (1972) suggested that Amorites are usually differentiated from Canaanites in the conventional lists of the peoples of Canaan attributable to several of the biblical schools (Gen 15:21, Exod 3:8, 17, 13:5, 11, 23:23, 28, 33:2, 34:11, Num 13:29, 14:25, 44–45, Deut 7:11, 20:17, Jos 3:10, 9:1). And yet, the nomenclature is admittedly confusing at times. For example, one might gather from 1 Samuel 7:14 that even Philistines could be referred to as *hā'emōrî*.

There are, however, references to Amorites that have an air of realism about them. Judges 1 is most interesting in this regard, because it lists all of the towns and areas both conquered and left unconquered in Joshua's time. This chapter delineates extensive areas that the Canaanites still occupied (Judg 1:27–33), and then proceeds to list separately a more restricted area in the Valley of Aijalon, around Shaalbim, that was controlled by the Amorites (Judg 1:34–35, and Aharoni-Rainey 1989:56, 58, maps 64 and 68, and N. Na'aman 1986). One is similarly reluctant to dismiss as an invention the text of

Genesis 14:1–11, describing a war of international proportions that took place in the area south of the Dead Sea. Some have considered that Genesis 14:1–11 preserve the oldest military tradition in the Hebrew Bible, and have noted in it a pattern of glossating older toponyms with place names more familiar to later readers. Thus, Genesis 14:7 speaks of a battle with the Amalekites at Ein-Mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and with the Amorites settled at Hasason-Tamar, at Belaʿ (that is, Zoar), at the southern tip of the Dead Sea. In that statement the "open country of the Amalekites" (*śedēh hāʿamālēqî*) is differentiated geographically from the Amorite area of settlement. Finally, there are the words of Amos 2:9, cited in the Introduction to Numbers 21–36, that refer to the very Israelite victories over the Amorites about which we read in Numbers 21.

Without entering into a full discussion of all biblical references to the Amorites east and west of the Jordan, we are warranted in regarding them as an historical group, even if some references to them are not. Who were they, and, more specifically, how did they get to Transjordan? Mendenhall (1992, in *ABD* I:199–202) has made a plausible suggestion regarding the identity of the Amorites of Numbers 21. In his view, "Amorite" (Hebrew *hāʾemōrî*) often served as a political designation, applicable not only to ethnic Amorites, but to others who came from North Syria. According to his historical reconstruction, Canaan and Transjordan at the beginning of the Iron Age absorbed large numbers of immigrants from the kingdom of Amurru, which had been established as early as the fifteenth century B.C.E. in the region of the northern Orontes. The names of the kings of Amurru are mentioned in inscriptions from Alalakh, level V, dating from that period. The kingdom of Amurru was destroyed early in the Iron Age. Mendenhall concludes that some surviving rulers or ruling elites from Amurru reestablished themselves in other regions, such as in Canaan and Transjordan, much in the way that certain groups of Hittites did in establishing city-states, like Hamah, for example, in Syria after the demise of the New Hittite empire. This process may also explain the identity of the Jebusite city-state in what was to become Israelite Jerusalem. As noted by Mendenhall, Jebus (Hebrew *Yebûs*) is an Amorite name, attested as *Yabūsum* in the Amarna letters, some of which come from Jerusalem and attest the presence of North Syrian scribes in pre-Israelite Jebus (Moran 1992).

An early poetic tradition also speaks of Gadite expansion, albeit without explicitly locating where Gadite territory lay, and without chronological indicators. Nevertheless, it can be shown that reference is to Transjordan. Deuteronomy 33, presented in poetic form as Moses' final farewell to his people, contains, in Deuteronomy 33:20–21, a "blessing" addressed to the tribe of Gad. This passage is not without its difficulties, and it is likely that only Deuteronomy 33:20–21a pertain to the blessing of Gad. (Deut 33:21b, aside from its internally garbled condition, is probably misplaced.) The following translation of Deuteronomy 33:20–21, influenced in no small measure by the insights of Cross and Freedman (1997:68, 75) can be proposed:

וּלְגָד אָמַר:
בָּרוּךְ מַרְחִיב גָּד!
כְּלָבִיא שָׁכֵן, וְטָרַף זְרוֹעַ אַף־קָדְקֹד.
וַיַּרְא רֵאשִׁית לוֹ, כִּי־שָׁם חֶלְקַת מְחֹקֵק.

And to Gad he said:

> Blessed is the enlarger of Gad!
> Like a lion he crouches, to tear off arm and pate.
> He chose the choicest [land] for himself,
> For there, the magistrate's field is [found].

The poet praises YHWH for enabling the tribe of Gad to expand its territory, a development conveyed by the Hebrew verb *hirḥîb* "to broaden," a verb often used with Hebrew *gebûl* "boundary" in referring to territorial expansion (Exod 34:24, Deut 12:20, 19:8, Amos 1:13). The poet then speaks of this tribe's military prowess, and of its wisdom in selecting the best land for itself. Somewhat telling is the occurrence of the tribal title *meḥôqēq* "magistrate" in the blessing of Gad. This title also occurs in Numbers 21, in the Song of the Well (Num 21:18), with reference to the role of these magistrates in delving the celebrated well on the Moabite border, just north of the Arnon. In Notes to Numbers 21:17b–18, mention was made of the fact that *meḥôqēq* appears in the Song of Deborah, Judges 5, which shares an inventory of early leadership terms with the Song of the Well. What is of particular interest is that the specified *meḥōqeqîm* of the Song of Deborah were Transjordanian Israelites. Thus, *meḥōqeqîm* from Machir answer the call to battle (Judg 5:14), and from Reuben came those who were, in the words of Judges 5:15: "grandees, magistrates whom I admire" (reading: *gedôlîm, ḥôqeqê libbî,* after Judg 5:9). Although the term *meḥôqēq* is once used with specific reference to the tribe of Judah in Genesis 49:10, and with general reference in the Song of Deborah itself, it is a fairly rare term after all. Consequently, its appearance in the Gadite blessing of Deuteronomy 33, in the Song of Deborah, and in the Song of the Well, all with reference to Transjordanian Israelites, serves to connect all three early Hebrew poems. Such common usage tends to confirm for Deuteronomy 33:20–21 what we know from other biblical traditions, and from the Mesha Stele: The Gadites expanded into North Moab at an early period.

A reasonable chronology would date the first Israelite settlements in southern Transjordan either to the eleventh century, or, as is more likely, to the period of the United Monarchy, in the tenth century B.C.E. Referring to the analysis of recent archaeological activity presented above, it is worth repeating here what has been learned: Recent archaeological activity, especially at Tell el-'Umeiri, confirms the existence of at least one heavily fortified city in the general Heshbon area in the early twelfth century B.C.E., and encourages the search for more of the same. The words of the Heshbon Ballad about a fortified Amorite capital at Heshbon are geographically imprecise, to be sure, but they are not unrealistic for the early Iron I period in the Moabite Tableland. It is historically possible, therefore, that an Amorite kingdom or city-state flourished ephemerally in North Moab during the early Iron I period, and that it was ultimately replaced by the Gadites and other Israelites who settled the area. Whether or not there was a war with the Amorites, or whether their settlement came to its end in another way, is unclear.

COMMENT 3:
THE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY LITERARY FUNCTIONS OF THE HESHBON BALLAD

It remains to discuss the Heshbon Ballad itself so as to determine whether it elucidates in an historical way the earliest phase of Israelite settlement in southern Transjordan. Thus far, all we have affirmed is that the ballad refers to an Amorite kingdom whose existence in the general area, though not specifically at Heshbon, is historically possible. This was the primary reason for citing the ballad; it was to confirm that Heshbon was known as having been an Amorite city, not a Moabite one. More will said on this account in discussing the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the Heshbon Ballad.

It must be admitted that the significance of the Heshbon ballad would be considerably enhanced if it could be interpreted as having a bearing on Israelite-Moabite relations at an early period. One is inevitably surprised to find a dramatic ballad cited merely as background. However taken, the Heshbon Ballad raises all sorts of historical questions about the antiquity of the Moabites as an identifiable entity, and concerning the territorial extent of Moab at various periods of biblical history. It is probably unwarranted historically to assume the existence of a kingdom of Moab in the first half of the twelfth century B.C.E. or even a century later. So we may dismiss the statement of the redactor, who interpolated Numbers 21:26, in referring to Sihon's battle with an earlier king of Moab, as a projection with a specific purpose rather than as having historical significance. The ballad itself speaks of a Moabite *'ām* "people," a term designating a kinship group, not a monarchy, and it names several towns, most notably Dibon and Medeba. Weippert (1979) may have been correct in rejecting the alleged identification of Dibon in Egyptian toponym lists of the late Bronze Age. Urban construction was found at Dibon for the early Bronze period (EB III), and after a gap of many centuries, Iron Age buildings were uncovered atop the tell. A central edifice probably served as a temple, and yielded a ceramic censer of the type found in the Iron I stratum at Beth Shean. There were other buildings on the northeastern part of the tell, which may have been storehouses. Tushingham (1992, in *ABD* II:194–196) dates this first period of urban construction at Dibon to the ninth century B.C.E. As for Medeba, there is too little evidence to indicate urbanization in the early Iron I period. The poem was, after all, written at a time when Dibon and Medeba were well-known Moabite towns. At that later period, there was a kingdom of Moab, just as there was an Edom and an Ammon. Both the JE historiographers and the author of the Heshbon Ballad projected these realities into an earlier age.

By way of contrast with the vagueness of Moabite history, Weippert (1982) attributes a high degree of credibility to the biblical recollection of the kings who reigned in Edom before the rise of the Israelite monarchy that is preserved in Genesis 36:31–43. He is less impressed, however, with the historicity of the record of the delegation to Edom in Numbers 20:14–21. Weippert estimates that we can speak of Edom as an entity as early as the eleventh century B.C.E. We know less about the history of Moab in the tenth century B.C.E. Recently, Younker (1994) has argued that it is historically reasonable to speak of tribes and chieftains in Moab during the early Iron Age. The Song of the Sea (Exod 15) speaks of both Edom and Moab in this way:

> Then were the bulls (= heads) of Edom (*'allûpê 'Edôm*) thrown into panic;
> The rams (= leaders) of Moab (*'êlê Mô'āb*) were seized by trembling.

In Notes to Numbers 21:27–30, it was explained in detail how the literary utilization of the Heshbon Ballad is to be understood. It is doubtful, however, that the Heshbon Ballad was originally written in order to educate us about the land of Moab or about the Moabites of the twelfth or eleventh centuries B.C.E. In fact, it was originally written in order to inform us about a later Israelite conquest of North Moab. What it alludes to, by way of anachronistic irony, is that the territory later known as the Moabite Mishor had been ruled by Amorites in the early Iron Age. This allusion comes in the reference to Heshbon as Sihon's capital.

We must be careful to emphasize that we are not suggesting that Israelite settlement activity in Transjordan, whether peaceful or bellicose, was in any way associated with an Israelite Exodus from Egypt, which is how the JE historiographers cast these events. It has been noted by any number of commentators that the Heshbon Ballad projects a north-south conquest of Moab, whereas the Torah historiographies consistently project a south-north route in

Transjordan, or in the desert to the east of it. Nor can existing evidence identify with certainty the place(s) of origin of those Israelites who settled in Transjordan, except to suggest an eastward expansion from Canaan. Without undertaking a discussion of the historicity of the Exodus traditions themselves, it can be stated, in a general way, that the JE historiography, with its accompanying chronology, is a construction superimposed on the primary evidence available to the biblical writers themselves. A classic example is the secondary interpretation of the Heshbon Ballad as proof of an Amorite conquest of Moab. In some respects, this construction directly collides with other biblical traditions, as it does with the evidence of Israelite settlement in Transjordan available to modern scholarship. What is more, the actual history of Israelite settlement in Transjordan must be understood within the larger framework of the Israelite conquest and settlement of Canaan proper, west of the Jordan. There will be more discussion of the Israelite communities of Transjordan in the commentary on the Balaam Pericope, Numbers 22–24.

COMMENT 4:
THE BATTLE AT HORMAH (NUM 21:1–3)

Considerable attention was given to this passage in the Introduction to the Book of Numbers (Levine 1993:55, 62), and, more immediately, in Notes to Numbers 21:1–3. Continuing the method applied to the analysis of the Heshbon traditions, we will try to determine whether Numbers 21:1–3 have anything to tell us about the period of reference they purport to describe. According to the internal biblical chronology, the period of reference of Numbers 21:1–3 would likewise be during the thirty-ninth and fortieth years after the Exodus from Egypt, at the end of the Wilderness Period, in more general terms the period of the initial Israelite settlements in southern Canaan. R. de Vaux (1978) was of the opinion that this account had an historical basis, notwithstanding its etiological character, and we now have a detailed study by N. Naʿaman (1986), who endorses this conclusion, albeit on a different basis.

Underlying recent attempts to deal historically with Numbers 21:1–3 has been the problem of locating biblical Hormah. This comes against the background of archaeological excavations at no less than four biblical sites in the eastern Negeb—at Tell Arad, Tell Milḥ, Tell Masos, and Tell Beer Sheba. This is how Naʿaman (1983) has summarized the overall results of the excavations:

> Contrary to expectations, there was not found in the eastern Negeb a single site that was inhabited during the late Bronze Age, on the eve of the settlement of the Israelite tribes.

Most investigators of the Hormah tradition, like Y. Aharoni (1981), had searched for Hormah in the vicinity of Arad and Beer Sheba, variously identifying it as Tell Milh or Tell Masos. In contrast, Naʿaman argues that Hormah was located in the western Negeb, near Ziqlag, where the archaeological facts are different. Following J. Liver (1967), he concludes that the two traditions of Numbers 21:1–3 and of Judges 1:16–17, are reporting on the same event, the conquest by the tribes of Judah and Simeon of the Canaanite town Zephath, which would have been renamed Hormah by its Israelite captors. If we accept this identification, the question then poses itself as to where the Zephath-Hormah of Judges 1:16–17 was located, and when it was inhabited. Naʿaman notes that three times Hormah immediately precedes Ziqlag (tell esh-Shaha) in Biblical town lists—in Joshua 15:30, 19:4, and 1 Chronicles 4:30. Particularly as regards Joshua 15, dated to the reign of Josiah, one notices that the list is comprised of two parts: It begins with towns in the eastern Negeb, among them Arad, and concludes with towns in the western Negeb, among them Ziqlag and Hormah. Naʿaman proposes to identify Hormah with Tell Halif, a large and outstanding tell, where, in recent excavations, late Bronze B habitation levels have been uncovered.

Now, Numbers 21:1–3 give the impression that Hormah was nearby Arad. But Judges 1:16–17 may be describing a lengthy advance of Israelite armies from the area of Arad in the eastern Negeb to Zephath-Hormah in the western Negeb, with the clear result that this western Negeb site was captured. This event became linked in biblical historiography with other attempts to penetrate the southern Negeb like Numbers 21:1–3 and Numbers 14:44–45 (and perhaps Deut 1:43–44), where etiology and the specific agendas of the "all Israelite" tendency took over and blurred distinctions between the eastern and western zones of the Negeb. If Naʿaman's analysis is correct, an historical core has been found for Numbers 21:1–3 through its association with Judges 1:16–17.

COMMENT 5: THE *SITZ-IM-LEBEN* OF NUMBERS 21

It is now possible to advance to further dimensions of the interpretation of Numbers 21 in an attempt to read the minds of its authors and to determine what they knew of both their present and their past. An evaluation of the historical core of Numbers 21, that is to say, what may be historical in the characterization of the period of reference, has already been presented. The next task is to subject Numbers 21 to source-critical analysis, which holds the key to identifying the *Sitz-im-Leben* of ancient authors. If we could identify who contributed the parts to the whole of Numbers 21, and for whom these texts speak, we would be in a better position to understand the messages Numbers 21 was intended to transmit.

In terms of genre, we note two strata in Numbers 21: (1) Historiography in the form of narrative chronicles, and (2) Hebrew poetry. The Notes to Numbers 21:14 discuss the technique of citing epic poetry in the narrative, and explain how the several poetic citations function as proof-texts. In Notes to Numbers 21:27–30, and in the Comments on the Heshbon Ballad, it was necessary to call attention to problems in the composition of this poem in its received form. As regards historiography, it has been noted that in Numbers 21:4, there is a priestly interpolation mentioning Mount Hor, thereby echoing the priestly account in Numbers 20:22–29. In the Introduction to Numbers 21, it was further observed that this chapter effectively allows the passing of the Wilderness Generation to go unnoticed. The implications of this omission and the identification of those responsible for it cannot be fully clarified. But, notwithstanding occasional discussion of source-critical problems, no systematic analysis of the composition of Numbers 21 has been presented up to this point.

The narrative historiography of Numbers 21 consists of two easily identifiable sections: There is, first of all, the brief account of the battle with the king of Arad at Hormah (Num 21:1–3). Both the historical problems occasioned by his account and its curious placement at the beginning of Numbers 21 have already been discussed. Following this report, Numbers 21:4–35 narrate the advance of the Israelites through Transjordan and their encounters with Sihon, the Amorite king, and Og, king of Bashan, as well as the reconnaissance and occupation of Jazer. This textual unit actually concludes in Numbers 22:1 with the arrival of the Israelites in the Plains of Moab. Within Numbers 21:4–35 there are signs of stratification that, if pursued in depth, may prove informative. Gray (Gray-ICC:277, s.v. 21:4) regarded Numbers 21:4–11 as a discrete unit, broken off after verse 11, only to be resumed in Numbers 22:1. On this basis, the Israelites arrived at Iyye-Abarim in the desert east of Moab, and from there proceeded directly to the Plains of Moab facing Jericho. According to this analysis, all that is told in Numbers 21:12–35 about the conquest and settlement of parts of Transjordan north of the Arnon derives from a different hand. This matter has not been previously addressed in the Introduction to Numbers 1–20.

There is, indeed, a change in style after Numbers 21:11. In Numbers 21:4, 10–11, 22:1, the formulation is *wayyisseʿû* "Then they marched," whereas in Numbers 21:12–13 we have: *miššām nāsāʿû* "from there, they marched," resumed partially in verse 16: *ûmiššām* "and from there." Nowhere in Numbers 21:12–35 does the formula *wayyisseʿû*, recur (cf. *miššām nāsāʿû*, once in Deut 10:7). This formulation is extremely rare, and therefore distinctive, and tends to set Numbers 21:12–35 apart. Without the content of Numbers 21:12–35, the remaining section, Numbers 21:4–11, 2:1, would register a rather bland itinerary, made interesting only by an horrendous tale of divine wrath tempered with divine providence and involving magical means of dealing with snakebites. With Numbers 21:12–35 included, Numbers 21 becomes a dramatic record of wars with the Amorites, documenting the Israelite occupation and settlement of Transjordan north of the Arnon.

The starting point of the present discussion proceeds from the observation that whoever wrote Numbers 21:12–35, and whoever subsequently gave us Numbers 21 in its received form, with verses 12–35 included, surely attached great importance to the Transjordanian encounters with the Amorites, and to relations with the Moabites, especially as regards the delineation of the borders of Moab. The same can be said of whoever gave us Deuteronomy 2–3, where the same agenda is in evidence. Were the authors and compilers of Numbers 21 also of the Deuteronomic school? This question has been widely debated. Since there are significant differences in viewpoint between the JE historiographers and the Deuteronomist, one doubts the direct attribution of the major part of Numbers 21 to the Deuteronomist. On the whole it would appear that Deuteronomy 2–3 drew upon the JE historiography of Numbers, preserved in Numbers 20:14–21, 21:4–35, on parts of Numbers 32, and also upon other non-Pentateuchal sources in formulating a systematic presentation of attitudes toward the Transjordanian peoples. What sound like resonances of Deuteronomic diction in the Numbers traditions may actually represent the rhetoric of the earlier Elohist, whose contribution to the JE historiography in Numbers was considerable. The only exception is the narrative of the Bashan campaign in Numbers 21:33–35, which, because of its unusual resemblance to Deuteronomy 3:1–3 may, indeed, be based on the Deuteronomist.

In the JE traditions of Numbers 20–21 we encounter four ethnic groups, or nations: Edom, Ammon, Moab and the Amorites. We are told that the inhabitants of Jazer were Amorites, and, most probably, the inhabitants of the Bashan, Og's kingdom, were as well. We need not posit five distinct groups, as does W. A. Sumner (1968) in his otherwise interesting study. Direct military engagements between the Israelites and the first three of these groups are avoided, one way or another, whereas war breaks out with the Amorites. The Edomites, whose kinship with Israel is highlighted, nevertheless act with hostility toward the Israelites and refuse them passage, with the result that the Israelites "turn away" from them (the Hebrew *nāṭāh mēʿal*—Num 20:14–21). It has been possible to suggest the probable *Sitz-im-Leben* of the author of the mission to Edom in Numbers 20:14–21 because of two clear giveaways: Kadesh was said to be located on the Edomite border, and the Edomite king threatened to confront the Israelites with the sword. This threat resonates with the diction of Amos 1:11–12, in the oracle on Moab, and the location of Kadesh points to the period after the death of Jotham, in the eighth century B.C.E., when Edom rebelled against Judah and expanded her borders westward. Amos' oracle is probably a reaction to this very situation. Further, an ostracon from Arad, dated to this period, in the eighth century B.C.E., also speaks of hostile Edomites (Levine 1993:91–92).

As for Ammon, we have only a brief aside, or gloss, in Numbers 21:24, informing the reader that the Ammonite border was heavily fortified. The result was that the Israelites didn't even consider invading Ammonite territory. As will become evident, there is much about Ammon and the Ammonites in the early period that we do not know. At present, there is no clear evidence of forts in the Ammon area before ca. 800 B.C.E., and those that have been excavated, such as Dreijat near Tell el-ʿUmeiri, date from the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.E. (R. Younker, personal communication). Quite possibly, the reference to a fortified Ammonite border dates from that later period. We know more about Moab and the Moabites, but it is not clear how the JE traditions of Numbers 21 meant to deal with that land and its people. The treatment of Moab in Numbers 21 proceeds in two stages: In the first instance, we are made to believe that the Israelites never had designs on Moab proper, south of the Arnon. This message is conveyed by documenting the location of the northern border of Moab at the Arnon, which is where the Israelites were poised to advance. Then, Numbers 21:26 introduces the argument that the region north of the Arnon and up to the Jabbok, which the Israelites were invading, had been lost by Moab in the past, so that by the time the Israelites arrived on the scene it had already become Amorite territory. The Heshbon Ballad is cited to prove that Heshbon was known as the capital of Sihon, the Amorite king, not as a Moabite town.

This is a very interesting twist: The historic attachment of the Moabites to North Moab is acknowledged as a fact; we are told that at one time this region had belonged to Moab. But this is past history, and cannot determine present jurisdiction, because subsequent events have intervened to invalidate Moab's claim. It is as if an Israelite spokesman is arguing with a representative of the Moabites about rival claims to the same territory. Perhaps it would be helpful, at this point, to review a spin-off of Numbers 21, one that shares a similar agenda, so as to see how jurisdictional argumentation is presented by different biblical writers. Reference is to Judges 11, where the Ammonites are the main subject of argument, not the Moabites. One must agree with Weippert (1979) that Judges 11 is predicated on Numbers 21, not the reverse, as some have insisted.

The scene is set in the early period of Israelite settlement. Jephthah the Gileadite has been chosen to lead the Israelites in their defensive war against the Ammonites. Like Moses and the Israelites, who had sent missions to the Edomites and Amorites on their way through Transjordan, Jephthah sent a delegation to the aggressor Ammonites, protesting their incursions into Gilead. The king of the Ammonites responded with a speech that would have been entirely appropriate for the Moabites of Numbers 21, had they spoken up for themselves. The Ammonite king claims that after the Exodus, the Israelites had seized his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, and to the Jordan on the west. He is now attempting to retrieve it. In response to this claim, Jephthah effectively summarizes Numbers 20:14–21 and 21:4–35, formulating an argument voiced by the JE historiographers of Numbers 21: This region was no longer your land when we seized it; it had previously passed into the hands of Sihon and the Amorites. YHWH, our God, gave us victory over Sihon, thereby transferring possession of it to us, in turn. Be content to possess what Kemosh, your god, has given you!

To identify the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the Jephthah account, one would have to search for an historical situation in which Ammon was threatening the Israelite settlements in Gilead. In a parallel way, our present concern is to identify the point in the course of biblical history when the Moabite agenda of Numbers 21 would have been most relevant. Logically, we should be searching for a time after the Israelites had taken North Moab from the Moabites, or while they were still engaged in military campaigns toward that end. Bernhardt (1982), whose observations on Israelite settlements in Transjordan were discussed earlier, reviews the history of the Israelite domination of regions of Transjordan, beginning with David's subjugation of Edom, Ammon and Moab in the tenth century, and continuing through the reign of Mesha, the Moabite king, in the ninth century B.C.E. He notes that we have very little information about David's original subjugation of Moab. Most of our information about subsequent periods comes from the Mesha Stele and from biblical sources, which, as Bernhardt reminds us, can often be historically problematic. Bernhardt analyzes the political situation in Transjordan after the breakup of the United Monarchy upon Solomon's death, a process that actually began during Solomon's reign. Both the biblical record (2 Kings 3:4) and the Mesha Stele assume that Moab remained tributary to northern Israel until the death of Ahab (852 B.C.E.). The Mesha Stele states that it was Omri of northern Israel (882–871) who suppressed Moab for many years. Bernhardt explains the importance for Omri of securing his eastern frontier. The main cause of concern in northern Israel was the rise of the Aramaean kingdom of Damascus, which had already begun to take form during the United Monarchy, threatening Israelite dependencies in northern Transjordan (1 Kings 11:25). Then, too, in 877 B.C.E., Ashurnaṣirpal II of Assyria mounted a campaign in Syria, which threatened both northern Israel and Aram-Damascus.

According to the Mesha Stele, the Omrides held "the entire open country around Medeba" (*kl ʿrs Mhdb*ʾ) for forty years, which brings us down to ca. 840, or a few years earlier. (Some date the forty years of Israelite domination over North Moab from the twelfth year of Omri's reign.) It is then that Mesha would have begun his campaign to retrieve the region of North Moab from Israelite domination. This time frame roughly correlates with the change of regimes in northern Israel, and with the political situation in Aram-Damascus. Ahab died in 852, which is when, according to 2 Kings 3:4, Mesha rebelled, but perhaps not immediately, as we shall see. In Mesha's review of the activities of the Omrides he mentions two towns that were seized by the king of Israel in the area of Medeba: *Baʿal Meʿôn* (Maʿin) and *Qiryātôn* (el-Qureije). This suggests that "the entire open country of Medeba" probably extended northward as far as Nebo, which, as Mesha states, belonged to Israel when he was commanded by Kemosh to occupy it. Further south, but north of the Arnon, "the king of Israel," namely, Omri, had fortified Ataroth in the west-central Tableland, and Jahaz, to the east. The Mesha Stele does not record that the king of Israel ever held Dibon, located south of Ataroth and Jahaz, nearer the Arnon. Either Omri's campaigns had never taken him that far south, or it may be that Mesha, who himself hailed from Dibon, had already liberated his hometown before starting to move against other Israelite strongholds in the Moabite Tableland. One could infer as much from the Mesha Stele, lines 27–28, where Mesha relates that he built or fortified Beser with manpower recruited from Dibon, adding: *ky kl Dybn mšmʿt* "for all of Dibon had been subjugated." The Mesha Stele does not mention Heshbon, most likely because Mesha never captured Heshbon; his campaigns probably halted just south of Heshbon, at Nebo.

It is after 845 that Mesha would have had the best chance to retake so large a part of the Moabite Tableland from northern Israel, although it is far from certain just how much he actually retrieved. Two events of considerable significance occurred simultaneously to make this possible: The Omride dynasty came to an abrupt end when Jehu usurped the throne, and Hazael similarly usurped the Aramean throne. It is of interest to note that Elijah and Elisha were instrumental in both usurpations. It is unlikely that Jehu held on to the Moabite Tableland very long. For a few years, Hazael was busy fighting Shalmaneser III, but after 838 B.C.E., he had achieved his principal goals, so that the Moabite Tableland was open to him. It was ca. 840 when Mesha probably commenced his movement north of Dibon, benefiting from the vacuum that he had been created in that region. The *Sitz-im-Leben* of the Heshbon Ballad fits the period that Bernhardt calls "*pax Aramaica*," before the death of Ahab (852) and the respective usurpations of Hazael and Jehu (845). During this period, and undoubtedly with Aramean concurrence, the Omrides had established a strong foothold in Transjordan. The narrative of the JE historiographers in Numbers 21, based primarily on the work of the Elohist, best fits the reign of Barhadad during the period before the anti-Assyrian coalition under Hadadezer was formed, in the 850s.

We may surmise that prior to this, from the 870s through the early 850s, relations between Israel and Ammon had not usually been friendly. David had fought hard to subjugate Ammon, and Ammon may have remained subservient in the period following. But, after the breakup of the United Monarchy, perhaps even sooner, Ammon probably asserted its independence of Israelite domination. The Omrides did not require control over Ammon for their security, as they did over North Moab. Ammon's western border lay quite far to the east, and once the Omrides had secured the territory between the Ammonite border and the Jordan, their principal objectives would have been met. This reality may be reflected in the probable gloss in Deuteronomy 2:37a: "Only to the land of the Ammonites you did approach." So, whereas it took the Moabites forty years to get free of northern Israel, it may not have taken the Ammonites nearly that length of time because Israel did not "subjugate" Ammon, as the Mesha inscription would have put it.

The Heshbon Ballad was "recycled" by the JE historiographers, and projected into an earlier period, because it afforded them the proof-text they needed, namely, a reference to Heshbon as Sihon's capital. Originally, the ballad, which may have been written sometime during the reign of the Omrides, celebrated the victories of Omri and his successors in occupying the Moabite Tableland from Heshbon in the north down through Medeba to Dibon in the south. The north-to-south orientation of the ballad reflects what happened in reality: Omri either built Heshbon and its huge reservoir, himself, or refortified the town. It may have been built previously by the Gadites, or perhaps by the Reubenites (Num 32:37) who settled the area most likely during the United Monarchy after David's subjugation of Moab. The ballad's description of the devastation of Moab refers to contemporary realities; it records the effects of the campaigns of Omri and his successors. In contrast, its characterization of Heshbon as Sihon's capital is retrospective; it expresses the perception of the ballad's author concerning earlier periods of history. In reality, that author knew of Heshbon as Omri's base in Transjordan, but in an effort to enhance its status retrojected its importance into the past, as if to say: "Look at Sihon's ancient capital now!" If a taunt was intended, this was the brunt of it (see Comment 3). By our reading of the ballad, the king of Israel dispatched expeditions from Heshbon and conquered the land down to Medeba and further to Dibon. According to the Mesha Stele, the conquered area ranged from Nebo in the north to Medeba in the south, so that the northernmost and southernmost outposts reported in the ballad are not registered as Omri's former hegemony in the Mesha Stele.

Notwithstanding differences in detail, the geographical overlaps between the Mesha Stela and the Heshbon Ballad are instructive. When we add to them the points of contact in usage between the Mesha Stele, the Heshbon Ballad, and the narrative chronicles of Numbers 21, the case for a common

Sitz-im-Leben with the Mesha Stele is strengthened. The verb *b-n-h* "to build, fortify," as applied to towns, is significant in the Heshbon Ballad, the narrative chronicles and in the Mesha Stele. The same is true of the verb *y-r-š* "to take possession of, seize," said of towns and territories, and the verb *y-š-b* "to settle, inhabit," as between the Mesha Stele and the narrative chronicles. The ballad calls the Moabites *ʿam Kemôš* "the people of Kemosh," whereas Mesha repeatedly emphasizes that *Kemosh* is the national god of the Moabites; Mesha's own father was named *Kmšyt* (perhaps *kmšyt[n]* "Kemosh has granted, or "May Kemosh grant"). The ballad pronounces: *ʾabadta ʿam Kemôš* "You have vanished people of Kemosh," while Mesha gloats: *wyśrʾl ʾbd ʾbd ʿlm*" Then Israel has vanished, vanished forever."

The above reading of the Heshbon Ballad requires only one textual emendation, one that has been often suggested on metrical grounds (see Notes to Numbers 21:29). At the end of Numbers 21:29, the words *lemelek ʾEmōrî Sîḥôn* "to the Amorite king, Sihon" are to be recognized as an interpolation. These words are, in fact, the only explicit indication in the ballad that the Amorites were the conquerors of North Moab. It is likely that these words were added by a later author, or compiler, perhaps the JE historiographers themselves, so as to make the ballad conform to their recasting of early Israelite history. Without this questionable reference to the Amorites as captors, the poem can be read as describing the conquests of a contemporary king who operated from Sihon's ancient capital. In reality, it is the Israelite forces of Omri and/or his successors who are the fire consuming the Moabite Tableland, and causing the deportation of its people. The JE historiographers used the poetic reference to Heshbon for their own purposes: What had originally been a poetic recollection became a proof-text for their recasting of the Israelite settlement of Transjordan. Their message was that the origins of the Israelite community in the Moabite Tableland went back to the time of Moses, when the Amorites ruled the area, and when the Israelites defeated them so as to gain access to the Jordan.

PART II.

NUMBERS 22–24: THE BALAAM PERICOPE

◆

INTRODUCTION

Numbers 22–24 have become known as "The Balaam Pericope," and constitute an identifiable literary unit within the Book of Numbers. Later traditions speak of "The Book of Balaam" (see Comments), and internal analysis shows little direct interaction between Numbers 22–24 and what precedes and follows these chapters. Numbers 22:2 is redactional; it artificially connects the Balaam Pericope with the account of the Israelite victory over the Amorites in Numbers 21. But from that point on, the Balaam Pericope stands apart from the progression of the JE historiography in Numbers. JE resumes in Numbers 25:1–5, which take up where Numbers 22:1 broke off. Numbers 22:1 had brought the Israelites to the Plains of Moab, and Numbers 25:1 has them encamping in Shittim, namely, Abel-Shittim, located in the Plains of Moab (see Notes to Num 25:1). There, the Israelites and the Moabites became involved in a sinful, cultic encounter, and lapsed into the pagan worship of Baal-Peor. Although the Moabites figure in the background of the preceding chapter, Numbers 21, and are mentioned subsequently in Numbers 25:1–5, in the account of the Baal-Peor incident, there is no indication anywhere in Numbers that the Israelites faced a threatened or actual military confrontation with the Moabites over the right of free passage, as they did with the Edomites (Num 20:14–21) and the Amorites (Num 21:21–35). Nor is there reference to Moabite fortifications, as is said with respect to the Ammonites (Num 21:24). Rather, in Numbers 22–24 we read of a dramatic confrontation between the Moabites and Israelites, one charged with magical overtones and bearing religious messages.

The toponym Peor is mentioned in Numbers 23:28 as a site to which Balaam was brought in order to curse Israel, and from which he had a view of the wilderness. The local or regional pagan deity, Baal-Peor, was associated with the same place. So, there may be an allusive connection between the Balaam Pericope and the Baal Peor incident regarding relations with the Moabites, but little more than that. It is significant that in the Balaam Pericope the Israelites are viewed from the perspective of the Moabites, who regard them as a powerful threat. Elsewhere in Numbers we are invariably shown events from the Israelite point of view, as this people encountered one seemingly insurmountable challenge after another in its drive to the Promised Land. This is one reason for considering the Balaam Pericope as a separate composition. Another reason is that attempts to assign the contents of Numbers 22–24 to the documentary sources, J and E, have run into difficulties. This has been shown most recently by A. Rofé (1981). A few interpolations can probably be attributed to priestly writers, as some had concluded, but it has been duly noted that the overall distribution of the divine names, *YHWH* and *'Elōhîm*, is blatantly inconsistent with the usual source-critical assignments. These divine names often alternate with each other in the ongoing narrative, making it virtually impossible to identify discrete sources on the basis of such usage. Although the translation will accurately differentiate between *YHWH,* left untranslated, and *'Elōhîm,* translated "God," such a distinction will not usually be made in the Commentary in discussing the content of the text. It is likely that the narrative of the Balaam Pericope drew upon existing sources, especially the Elohist of Northern Israel, and the poetic selections are clearly drawn from other sources. But, for reasons to be explored in the Comments on Numbers 22–24, it is preferable to regard the Balaam Pericope as an independent work, dotted with its own interpolations, as we would expect. Most notable of these interpolations is the "Tale of the Jenny" (Num 22:22–35), a picaresque fable mocking the reputed clairvoyance of diviners. It is cleverly "hinged" with the ongoing narrative that surrounds it.

As the narrative of Numbers 22 opens, Balak, the Moabite king, finds the Israelites massed on his border. The Israelites are described as a numerous force, feeding on the land and denuding it. Moab was in dread of the Israelites, and in desperation, Balak sent for Balaam, a noted diviner, and sought to engage his services in pronouncing execrations against the Israelites. Balak hoped to weaken the Israelites in this way, so that he would have a chance of defeating them in battle. The bulk of Numbers 22–24 centers around the figure of Balaam, and consists of narratives and poems. In the narratives we read how Balak's plan failed; how Balaam was bound by the authority of Israel's God and remained powerless to harm Israel, even if he had been agreeable to doing so, which is far from certain. Instead of the awaited execrations, Balaam pronounced blessings over Israel, predicting future Israelite victories. In dramatic poetry, Balaam characterizes Israel as a people blessed by YHWH, the God who reigns supreme. Israel is portrayed as a powerful fighting force that has no need of allies, and is unaffected by the divinatory efforts undertaken against him. Balaam expresses genuine awe for the God of Israel and respect for his people. In the customary manner of international prophets, he also prophesies on the destiny of neighboring nations.

Certain problems affecting the composition of the Balaam Pericope will be explored in the Comments on Numbers 22–24, where the literary-historical relationship of the narratives to the poems will be clarified. A new appreciation of the cultural context of the Balaam orations, as well as of their literary character, has been gained from recent archaeological discoveries at Deir 'Alla, a tel located in the Jordan Valley some eight kilometers east of the Jordan. At that site, not too distant from the Plains of Moab, epic texts dating to the eighth century B.C.E., and celebrating an heroic seer named *Bl'm brb'r* "Balaam, son of Beor," have been unearthed. These texts, written in a local or regional language akin to Hebrew, have brought biblical scholarship nearer to its ultimate goal of identifying the historical *Sitz-im-Leben* of the Balaam poetic orations, and of their narrative accompaniments. The contents of Numbers 22–24 will here be summarized in a topical manner, with further introductory material provided at various points in the Notes, as the text unfolds. Numbers 22–24 may be outlined as follows:

1) Numbers 22:1—A priestly postscript to Numbers 21, reporting the arrival of the Israelites in the Plains of Moab. Actually, Numbers 22:1 concludes the preceding unit (Num 21:1–22:1), and has already been commented upon.
2) Numbers 22:2–21—The invitation to Balaam. Balak dispatches repeated missions to Balaam, urging him to use his diviner's arts against the Israelites. Balak promises Balaam great wealth, but Balaam persists in refusing to accompany Balak's emissaries, insisting that he is bound by God's authority. Finally, God appears to Balaam at night and grants him permission to accompany the emissaries, but with the admonition to do only what he is told.
3) Numbers 22:22–35—The Tale of the Jenny. This fable is correctly regarded by most literary analysts as deriving from a separate source. As if to contradict Numbers 22:20, where God had specifically granted Balaam permission to accompany Balak's emissaries, Numbers 22:22, within the tale, states that God was enraged when Balaam departed in the company of the Moabite princes, and consequently blocked his path as he was proceeding along the road astride his jenny. The Tale of the Jenny would appear to have been written for the primary purpose of mocking Balaam's capabilities, and may well reflect a later negative evaluation of him. For all of his reputed clairvoyance, Balaam is disparagingly depicted as one who could not see the angel of God standing in his path, even though his jenny could!
4) Numbers 22:36–41—Balaam arrives in Moab. Balaam accompanied Balak's chieftains to Moab, and is received at the border by Balak, who comes to greet him. Balak chides Balaam for his earlier reluctance. For his part, Balaam cautions Balak that he may speak only the words that God puts into his mouth.
5) Numbers 23:1–6—Balaam begins his work as Balak's diviner. Balaam was conducted to Bamoth Baal, whence he beheld the Israelites encamped in the Plains of Moab. He had seven altars constructed on that site and offered sacrifices upon them. Leaving Balak and his entourage stationed near the altars, Balaam walked about seeking a communication from God, which soon came to him. God ordered Balaam to return to where Balak and his chieftains stood waiting.
6) Numbers 23:7–10—Balaam's first poetic oration. Instead of cursing

the Israelites, Balaam blessed them and extolled their might, acknowledging them as a blessed nation.

7) Numbers 23:11–17—Balak's anger and disappointment. The Moabite king became cross with Balaam for having blessed the Israelites rather than pronouncing execrations against them. He suggested moving to another spot where Balaam might be less impressed by what he beheld. The group accordingly proceeded to a nearby mountain summit. Once again, Balaam had seven altars constructed, and offered sacrifices on them, and once again, he moved about, ultimately receiving a communication from God, who put words into his mouth.
8) Numbers 23:18–24—Balaam's second poetic oration. Addressing Balak by name, Balaam states that YHWH is with his people, and that El has singled out Israel for blessing and victory. Since he is not one to go back on his promise, El would not permit Israel to be cursed. Israel, says Balaam, has no need for augury and divination, since El's deeds are revealed to Israel in advance. El is powerful, and Israel, his people, is like a lion after its prey.
9) Numbers 23:25–30—The continuing narrative. Yet a new venue was sought in the hope that the God of Israel would permit effective curses against the Israelites from a different vantage point. The group arrived at the summit of Peor, overlooking the wilderness. Once again, seven altars were built, and sacrifices were offered on them.
10) Numbers 24:1–2—Balaam blesses Israel and eschews divination. He realizes that the God of Israel wants him to bless Israel, and that he has no further need of divination. Casting his eyes upon the desert, he beholds the entire vast Israelite camp, and the divine spirit possesses him.
11) Numbers 24:3–9—Balaam's third poetic oration. Balaam begins by stating his credentials as a diviner, representing himself as one who hears El's words and beholds Shadday's visions, and one who possesses Elyon's esoteric knowledge. He expresses his awe over the beauty and expanse of the Israelite encampment, and predicts victory for Israel's king over Agag. The probable allusion is to Saul and his victory over the Amalekites (1 Sam 15). Israel's God is powerful, and Israel, itself, is strong as a lion. Those who bless Israel will be blessed in turn, but those who curse Israel will be damned.
12) Numbers 24:10–14—Balaam and Balak part company. Balak dismisses Balaam in anger, while the latter once again insists that he was bound by God's command. Balaam refuses Balak's offer of profuse reward, but as if to be of some service, after all, he reveals to Balak what Israel will do to the Moabites in days to come.
13) Numbers 24:15–19—Balaam's fourth poetic oration. Repeating his

status and qualifications, Balaam proceeds to prophesy the future conquest and subjugation of the Transjordanian lands by an Israelite king, most likely alluding to David's campaign just as the third poem had alluded to Saul.

14) Numbers 24:20–24—Three short oracles, appended to Balaam's prophecies. They consist of brief statements on the Amalekites and Kenites, with a third somewhat cryptic oracle depicting the invasion of Assyria and Syria from Cyprus. These prophecies were undoubtedly attributed to Balaam so as to lend to him the persona of an international prophet.
15) Numbers 24:25—A postscript.

TRANSLATION—NUMBERS 22:2–41

22 [2]Now, Balak, the son of Zippor, observed all that the Israelites had wrought upon the Amorites.

[3]The Moabites were in deep dread of the people, for they were so numerous. The Moabites were fearful at the sight of the Israelites.

[4]Then the Moabites said *to the Midianite elders*: "The next thing you know, this mass of people will chew up all our environs, as an ox chews up the vegetation of the field!" Now, Balak, the son of Zippor, was king over Moab at that time.

[5]He dispatched emissaries to Balaam, the son of Beor, at Pethor, which lies on the river, in the land of the *Ammonites*, to invite him. They brought the following message: "Observe how this people, after leaving Egypt, has covered the face of the land and is now encamped opposite me.

[6]"Now then: Proceed to pronounce execrations for me against this people, for he is more numerous than I. Perhaps I may then be capable of striking him, and driving him out of the land. For I know that whomever you bless is blessed, and whomever you curse is accursed."

[7]The Moabite elders departed *together with the Midianite elders*, bearing with them payment for divination. They approached Balaam, and related to him the words of Balak.

[8]He said to them: "Spend the night here, and I will issue you a reply according to what YHWH communicates to me." The Moabite chieftains remained with Balaam.

[9]God came to Balaam, and He said: Who are these men with you?

[10]Balaam replied to God: "Balak, the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent the following message to me:

[11]'Observe how the people that went forth from Egypt has covered the face of the land. Proceed, now, to pronounce execrations for me against him. Perhaps I may prevail over him in battle and drive him out.' "

[12]Thereupon God said to Balaam: Do not accompany them. You may not curse this people, for it has been blessed.

[13]Balaam arose on the morrow and addressed himself to Balak's chieftains: "Return to your land, for YHWH has refused to allow me to accompany you."

[14]Thereupon, the Moabite chieftains set out, and returned to Balak with the message: "Balaam has refused to accompany us."

[15]Balak persisted in dispatching chieftains, of even greater status than these.

[16]They approached Balaam and said to him: "Thus spoke Balak, the son of Zippor: 'Do not be prevented from coming to me;

[17]'For I shall reward you exceedingly. Whatever you require of me I shall provide. But, I pray, go, pronounce execrations for me against that people!' "

[18]Balaam responded by saying to Balak's courtiers: "Even if Balak were to lavish on me all the silver and gold that his palace contains I could not transgress the edict of YHWH, my God, by doing anything at all.

[19]"Now then, as for you—you remain lodged here tonight, as well, until I am apprised of what God may further instruct me."

[20]God came to Balaam during the night and said to him: If, indeed, these men have come to invite you, go along with them. But only the oracle that I communicate to you, such may you perform.

[21]So Balaam arose on the morrow, saddled his jenny, and accompanied the Moabite chieftains.

[22]God became enraged that he was undertaking the journey. The angel of YHWH stationed himself on the road, confronting him as an adversary while he rode along on his jenny, accompanied by his two squires.

[23]When the jenny saw the angel of YHWH stationed on the road, with his sword unsheathed in his hand, she swerved from the road and went into the field. Balaam struck the jenny to bring her back to the road.

[24]The angel of YHWH then halted in the narrow path of the vineyards, fenced in on both sides.

[25]Upon seeing the angel of YHWH, the jenny pressed herself against the fence, squeezing Balaam's leg against the fence. He continued to strike her.

[26]The angel of YHWH continued to move on, and halted in a narrow space with no room to move aside either to the right or to the left.

[27]When the jenny saw the angel of YHWH she crouched down under Balaam. Thereupon, Balaam became enraged and struck the jenny with the rod.

[28]YHWH opened the jenny's mouth, so that she spoke to Balaam: "What have I done to you, that you should strike me these three times?"

[29]Whereupon, Balaam said to the jenny: "Because you have tormented me. Would that I held a sword in my hand, for I would promptly slay you!"

[30]But the jenny said to Balaam: "Am I not your very own jenny, whom you have ridden from your first days until now? Have I ever before sought to gain an advantage by behaving toward you in such a manner?" He replied: "No."

[31]At that moment YHWH uncovered Balaam's eyes, so that he, too, saw the angel of YHWH stationed in the path, with his sword unsheathed in his hand. He bowed prostrate on his face.

[32]The angel of YHWH said to him: Why have you struck your jenny these three times? It was I, after all, who came forth as an adversary, for the mission was pressing upon me.

[33]When the jenny saw me, she dodged me three times. Had she not dodged me, it is you I would have surely slain, and I would have allowed her to remain alive.

[34]Balaam said to the angel of YHWH: "I have offended! I did not know that you were confronting me on the road. Now, then, if you disapprove, I shall be on my way back."

[35]But the angel of YHWH said to Balaam: Go with these men, but only the oracle that I communicate to you, such may you speak. So, Balaam accompanied Balak's chieftains:

[36]When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to greet him at Ir of Moab, which is on the border marked by the Arnon, [and] which is at the [nearest] extremity of the border.

[37]Balak said to Balaam: "Did I not send you an urgent message inviting you? Why did you not come to me? Am I not really capable of rewarding you?"

[38]Then Balaam said to Balak: "Behold, I have come to you. Now then: Can I really make any pronouncement? Only the oracle that God places in my mouth, such may I speak."

[39]Thereupon Balaam accompanied Balak, and they arrived at Kiriath-Huzoth.

[40]Balak sacrificed oxen and sheep, distributing them to Balaam and to the chieftains who were with him.

[41]When morning came, Balak took Balaam up to Bamoth-Baal. From there he beheld the [nearest] extremity of the people.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 22:2–21: BALAK'S INVITATION TO BALAAM AND GOD'S INTERVENTION

2. *Now, Balak, the son of Zippor.* This introductory verse is probably editorial, connecting the Balaam Pericope with the Israelite victory over the Amorites of Transjordan, recounted in Numbers 21. The actual narrative begins in verse 3, as intimated by the notation in verse 4 that Balak was the King of Moab at that time. This information would have been unnecessary if verse 2 were original. Little is known about the name *Bālāq* or the patronymic *Ṣippôr*,

which means "bird." The name *Bālāq* occurs only in Numbers 22–24, and in three retrospective references to this king in Joshua 24:9, Judges 11:25, and Micah 6:5. Now, biblical Hebrew attests a rare verb *bālaq*, a cognate of Arabic *balaqa*, meaning "to break, split" (Isa 24:1, Nah 2:11). The *qāṭāl* morphology (cf. *Bārāq* in Judg 4:6; 5:12, 16), well attested in Hebrew personal names, would yield the meaning "crusher, breaker." It is arguable, though hardly demonstrable, that *Bālāq* is a symbolic name, like *Nābāl* "worker of atrocities" (1 Sam 25:3). The symbolic interpretation would gain credibility if it could be shown that the name *Bilʿām* expressed the verb *b-l-ʿ* "to devour, destroy." The names of the two principals of the Balaam Pericope would then bear synonymous connotations! But this may be nothing more than fanciful speculation (see further, in Notes to Num 22:5, below). The patronymic *Ṣippôr*, a masculine version of Sipporah (Exod 18:2), daughter of the Midianite high priest who married Moses, might suggest a Midianite or Kenite connection, but perhaps not specifically so. There is considerable overlap in the personal names of the Transjordanian peoples.

3. *The Moabites were in deep dread . . . The Moabites were fearful.* The two verbs, *gûr* "to fear, be in dread of-" and *qûṣ* "to fear" (elsewhere: "to loathe"), characterize the attitude of the Moabites. The verb *gûr* voices extreme fear, the terror of war (Job 19:19), while Hebrew *qûṣ*, with differing syntax, expresses either loathing and disgust (Num 21:5), or, as is the case here, fear of someone or something (see Notes to Num 21:5). Throughout Numbers 22, Israel is most often referred to as *ʿām* "a people," *hāʿām* "the people" or *hāʿām hazzeh* "this people."

4. *Then the Moabites said to the Midianite elders: "The next thing you know."* The function of this verse is to convey the thrust of Moabite fears, namely, that a large force was feeding on the land and its surrounding areas, thereby depriving the Moabites of crops and water. It is unclear whether the Israelites were encamped within Moab proper, in which case they were encroaching, or on its borders, in which case they were threatening. Reference to *sebîbōtênû*, "our environs," suggests that the Israelites were encamped on the borders of Moab. This is further indicated by the statement of the Moabite king at the end of Numbers 22:5 to the effect that the Israelites were encamped opposite him, or facing him. And yet, Numbers 22:6 goes on to say that Balak would like help in expelling the Israelites *min hāʾāreṣ* "from the land." Perhaps it is unrealistic to expect precise consistency in the present narrative. The damage done by armies passing through a country, or even near it, and by those encamped on its borders, even when there was no intent to wage war, can be devastating. All of Israel's assurances about keeping to the King's Highway did not persuade the Edomite king (Num 20:14–21), or the Amorites (Num 21:21–22) to grant passage to the Israelite army.

It is likely that reference to the elders of Midian was interpolated here, and below, in verse 7, by redactors of the priestly school, as has been suggested. These are the only references to Midian in the entire Balaam Pericope. They are set apart in the translation. Similarly, in Numbers 25:6–9, the Midianites were introduced into the Baal-Peor episode by priestly writers, although the primary incident (Num 25:1–5) concerned only Moabites, and had been terminated. A probable reason for the introduction of the Midianites by priestly writers was given in the Introduction to the Book of Numbers (Levine 1993:94–95), and this subject will be discussed further in the Comments. Originally, Numbers 22:4 may have read as follows:

wayyō'mer Mô'āb ʿattāh yelaḥakû haqqāhāl—
Then the Moabites said: "The next thing you know, this mass of people—"

That the Hebrew *haqqāhāl,* frequently a term for the duly constituted Israelite community (Lev 4:13–14, Num 15:15), should be used in a gross way to refer to an enemy force feeding on the land might strike the reader as strange. And yet, Hebrew *qāhāl* may have the sense of "crowd, mob" (Jer 44:14, Ezek 16:40, 23:46), and denominative forms of the verb *q-h-l* in the Niphal stem describe violent confrontations (Exod 32:1, and see Notes to Num 16:3, Levine 1993:412).

"will chew up all our environs, as an ox chews up the vegetation of the field!"

The rare verb, *l-ḥ-k,* is usually expressed in the Piel, and refers to licking up dirt, as snakes are pictured doing (Micah 7:17), or as humiliated enemies are forced to do, at least figuratively speaking (Isa 49:23, Ps 72:9). Fire is said to "lap up" (*liḥekāh*) water (1 Kings 18:38). Here, *l-ḥ-k* is the work of oxen, feeding on vegetation. It is likely that both the construct infinitive, *kilḥōk,* and the imperfect *yelaḥakû* are in the Qal stem, with the Masoretic vocalization of the latter being conditioned by medial *ḥeṭ,* producing *yelaḥakû* instead of *yilḥakû.*

Now, Balak, the son of Zippor, was king over Moab at that time.

The identification of Balak as the king of Moab is a gloss, linking Numbers 22:3–21 to the introductory verse, Numbers 22:2.

5. *He dispatched emissaries to Balaam, the son of Beor, at Pethor.* This verse is crucial to identifying Balaam's homeland, and, hence, his identity. For this reason, it has received an inordinate degree of attention for well over a century. By way of introduction, it must be acknowledged that the Balaam Pericope incorporates at least two traditions regarding the identity of Balaam and his country of origin. Attempts to synthesize or blend them have led to forced interpretations and confusing results. It is enough of a challenge to show how these two traditions are expressed in the received text, and this should be the proper goal of a critical commentator. According to one tradition, Balaam was imported from Aram (Syria). Thus, the first poem of Balaam opens with the

statement that Balaam had been brought from Aram. The parallel hemistich has "from the mountains of the East" (Hebrew: *mēharerê qedem*) and this makes it clear that reference is to northeastern Syria. Thus, reading *ʾEdôm* in Numbers 23:7 instead of *ʾArām*, as W. F. Albright once suggested (1915, later retracted), would be incorrect (Albright 1944). Similarly, Deuteronomy 23:5–6 state that Balaam came from Pethor, the very town mentioned here, but there explicitly located in Aram-Naharaim. As Gray (Gray-*ICC*:326) explains, Naharin in the Egyptian inscriptions, and Nahrima, or Narima in the Amarna letters, delineates the river country extending from the Orontes eastward across the Euphrates. To be precise, "the mountains of the East" are not identical with Aram-Naharaim, and one must assume some flexibility even with respect to the Syrian tradition of Balaam's origins. The same is true of the second tradition, which regards Balaam as a Transjordanian, variously and obliquely linking him to the Midianites (Num 31:8), and to an Edomite king, *Belaʿ ben Beʿôr* (see further). If, in addition, we accept the readings of the Samaritan version and the Vulgate in the present verse, Balaam hailed from "the land of the Ammonites" (read: *ʾereṣ benê ʿAmmô[n]*) instead of Masoretic *ʾereṣ benê ʿammô* "the land of his people," which is awkward).

It must be realized that no exegesis of Numbers 22:5; however ingenious, can, in and of itself, clarify the larger questions regarding Balaam's origins, or resolve all of the problems involved in identifying discrete traditions about his identity. This broad task will be undertaken in the Comments. Here, it will suffice to explain Balaam's name for what it may tell us concerning the identity of this diviner, and to summarize what is known of the geographical indicators mentioned in the present verse. As noted, the name *Bilʿām ben Beʿôr* has been associated with that of *Belaʿ ben Beʿôr*, listed as the first Edomite king in Genesis 36:32. Hebrew *Belaʿ* also serves as a toponym, the prior name of *Ṣōʿar*, located at the southern end of the Dead Sea (Gen 14:2, 8). And yet, we also find a Transjordanian site, in the territory of Manasseh, called *Yibleʿām* (Judg 1:27), also written *Bilʿām* (1 Chron 6:55), a homograph of the diviner's name. The question boils down to the following: Is the form *Bilʿām* based on a verbal root, *b-l-ʿ*, or is it composed of *bl* + *ʿm?* The latter alternative could be explained as: Bel, a divine name, + *ʿām* "kinsman." On this basis, Hebrew *Bilʿām* has been compared with Assyrian *Bel-am-ma* = *Amma-baʿli* "Baal is my kinsman (*HALAT*:130, s.v. *Bilʿām* I)." Perhaps, one could read: *bûl* + *ʿām* "harvest of my kinsman" (cf. Job 40:20), an etymology that would also be appropriate for a toponym, and would explain the variant writing, *Yibleʿām*, namely, *yebûl* + *ʿām*, with the same meaning.

Such explanations would disassociate the name of *Bilʿām ben Beʿôr* from that of the Edomite king *Belaʿ ben Beʿôr*. It is difficult, however, to dismiss the similarity between the name of the diviner and that of the Edomite king, all the more so since they both exhibit the same patronymic. Since Hebrew

Belaʿ is elsewhere known both as a toponym and a personal name, one has further reason to regard the name *Bilʿām* as expressing the root *b-l-ʿ*. As a personal name, *Belaʿ* would mean "the destroyer." It was probably realized originally as a *qāṭāl* form, *Bālāʿ*, similar to *Bālāq*, and this might account for the vocalization *Balaam* in LXX and in the Samaritan version. As explained by G. B. Gray (1896:43), the form *Bilʿām* could represent *blʿ* + *m*, namely, the afformative *-ām*. Gray and those he cites (including Stade 1879) are not entirely accurate in their analysis of this afformative, however. More precisely, it represents a phonetic variant of *-ān*, which often becomes *-ôn*, a cognate of the Akkadian afformative *-ānu*, variously phoneticized *-āmu*. This afformative characterizes the action or state conveyed by the verb. Thus, *Bilʿām*, whether it reflects an original Piel or a *qāṭāl* form, would mean "the swallower, destroyer." It is unnecessary, therefore, to involve the component *ʿām* "kinsman" in the name Bilʿam. If the toponyms bear an etymological relationship to the personal names, which is not certain, then *Belaʿ*, *Yibleʿām* and *Bilʿām* might refer to a gorge, canyon or fault in the terrain.

It would, indeed, appear that the author of Numbers 22:5 was intentionally associating Balaam with the Edomites, for the correspondence of the two names, of the diviner and of the Edomite king, can hardly be incidental. This would favor the analysis according to which the verbal root *b-l-ʿ* is incorporated in the name *Bilʿām*. Furthermore, since the literary *mise en scène* of the Balaam Pericope is the preconquest period, it is not inconceivable that the author of the narrative sections of Numbers 22–24 was actually identifying Balaam, in his literary retrojection, as the first Edomite king who ruled before there was a monarchy in Israel, as reported in Genesis 36:31. In such terms, one king would have called upon another, who possessed special gifts, to assist him in defeating an enemy. Moabite-Edomite coalitions are not unknown in biblical times. It goes without saying that the above is speculative, but it is worth airing such speculation, albeit cautiously.

at Pethor, which lies on the river, in the land of the Ammonites

Balak sent his emissaries to Pethor, the Hebrew locative *Petôrāh*, situated as follows: *ʾašer ʿal hannāhār ʾereṣ benê ʿammô*, literally "which lies on the river, the land of his people." On the assumption that determined *hannāhār* "the 'river' " consistently refers to the Euphrates (Exod 23:31, Jos 24:2, 3, 14), and in line with the Aramean or Syrian tradition regarding Balaam's origin, certain scholars sought early on to identify Petor with Pitru, a site mentioned in the annals of Shalmanesser III, where it is said to be located at the juncture of the Euphrates and its tributary, the Sajur (Rouillard 1985:43–46). The same town is mentioned among the conquests of Thutmose III in the Karnak lists, where it is written *Pe-d-rui*. One would have expected the Assyrian name to be *Pitāru*, preserving a long *-ā-* vowel, or *Pitūru*, preserving a long *-ū-* vowel, if the biblical vocalization *Petôr* accurately reflects its pronunciation.

The problem of identifying Balaam's homeland becomes more complex when we attempt to make sense out of the unusual phrase *ʾereṣ benê ʿammô.* As it appears, it would mean something like *ʾereṣ môladtô* "the land of his birth" (cf. Gen 24:7, 31:13). As already mentioned, the Samaritan and the Vulgate read: *ʾereṣ benê ʿAmmô[n]* "the land of the Ammonites," which would be in line with the Transjordanian tradition concerning Balaam's origins. In an effort to avoid this collision of traditions in a single verse, and in support of the Syrian tradition, Albright (1944) identified Masoretic consonantal *ʿmw* with the name of a people mentioned in the Idrimi inscription, discovered in 1939 (Delcor 1982). In that inscription, Idrimi, king of Alalah, tells of a rebellion in his home town of Aleppo, which had compelled him to flee to Ammia, in Canaan. There he found various groups of refugees like himself—Aleppans, people from Mukish and Ni, and *[ṣabē] ma-at amae-*^{KI} "warriors of the land of Amau." Sidney Smith, publisher of the Idrimi inscription, located the land of Amau between Alalah and Sefire, identifying it as Imma or Emma of the Roman Period, a site distant from Pitru and the Euphrates. So, Pitru, even if it is to be identified as Pethor, was hardly located within the land of the Amau people! Viewed from the other direction, Pitru was too far east to be part of Idrimi's kingdom, which probably reached no further than Aleppo in the east, as Rofé (1981:34–35) has noted.

There is also the matter of the relative clause *ʾaser ʿal hannāhār* "which lies on the river." Some have pronounced it an interpolation by endorsers of the Syrian tradition, who may have likewise removed the final *nun* from *ʿAmmô[n].* Conversely, one could argue that this verse originally concluded with the words: *Petorah ʾašer ʿal hannāhār* "to Pethor which lies on the river (= Euphrates)," and that advocates of a Transjordanian Balaam added the reference to the land of the Ammonites. The closest we come to the formula *ʾereṣ benê* X. in biblical sources is *ʾarṣāh benê-qedem* "to the land of the Qedemites," in Genesis 29:31. If the reading *benê-ʿAmmô[n]* is accepted as authentic in Numbers 22:5, and if *hannāhār* need not refer specifically to the Euphrates, then Balaam's hometown, Pethor, as yet unidentified, would have been situated on the river of the land of the Ammonites, namely, the Jabbok/Zerqa, which passes along the jutting border of Ammon down to the Jordan. Close to the Jordan, down river, in the Valley of Sukkoth, is tel Deir ʿAlla where the Balaam inscriptions were discovered. So Balaam, whatever his specific nationality, resided in or near the land of the Ammonites. (See the Note to Numbers 22:36.) Essentially, this is Delcor's synthetic resolution of Numbers 22:5, except that he endorses the blatantly Midrashic explanation of Hebrew *Petôrāh* as "the interpreter" (precisely: *pātôrāh*), which is hardly acceptable as the original sense (Delcor 1982).

Thus it is that Numbers 22:5 gives out contradictory messages, with indications of successive redaction by advocates of one or another tradition concerning Balaam's origin. The broad question of Balaam's origin will be engaged in the Comments as part of an evaluation of the evidence from Deir ʿAlla. The Balaam inscriptions from Deir ʿAlla strongly endorse the identification of Balaam as a Transjordanian, leaving the commentator to account for the orientation of those biblical writers, in Numbers and Deuteronomy, who are responsible for the Syrian, Aramean tradition.

to invite him.

The force of the Hebrew *liq rôʾ lô* is probably that of an invitation, although *qārāʾ* + indirect object, when the subject of the verb is one in authority, can connote a summons (Num 16:12, Deut 25:8, Dan 2:2).

"Observe how this people, after leaving Egypt"

The narrative of Numbers 22:2–21 shows an awareness of the Exodus. The Israelites are the people who have left Egypt. They have covered *ʾet ʿên hāʾāres,* literally: "the eye of the land," namely, the face of the earth, as did the locusts brought upon Egypt (Exod 10:5, 15). Hebrew *mimmūlî* "opposite me," suggests relative proximity, as has been noted. And yet, in geographical contexts, some distance could be intended. Thus *môl Sûp* in Deuteronomy 1:1 means "facing Suph," in the sense that one area or region faces another (cf. 1 Kings 7:39, 1 Chron 14:14, 2 Chron 4:10). It is unclear, therefore, exactly where the Israelites were encamped (see above in Notes to Num 22:4, and just below, in Notes to Num 22:6).

6. *"Now then: Proceed to pronounce execrations."* The transition from verse 5 to verse 6 is marked by adverbial *weʿattāh* "now then." This represents epistolary style, appropriate for an official message, once it has been adapted to the narrative sequence. In an actual epistle, some form of the root **ʿnt* "now" introduces the message immediately following the opening salutations. This is true of the brief letters on ostraca from Lachish and Arad, where we find the epigraphic Hebrew form *ʿt(= ʿattā),* or *wʿt (weʿattā),* as well as of Aramaic letters, where the form is usually *keʿenet* or *keʿan* (Ezra 4:10, Dan 3:15, and see Fitzmyer 1974). In turn, these Hebrew and Aramaic components of epistolary style recall Old Babylonian letters, where the parallel form is usually *anumma* "now then," expressing the same Common-Semitic root. No Hebrew letters in their original form are preserved in the Hebrew Bible; all have been narrativized, or adapted to some degree. And yet, as is the case in the present verse, the epistolary formula functions in a significant way. Adverbial *weʿattāh* has been moved down into the message section from its earlier position. The message begins, and then, at a certain point, a juncture is signaled by adverbial *weʿattāh,* after which the message progresses to a subsequent point. This typology is characteristic of Hebrew epigraphy (Levine 1979), and in the present case explains the transition from Numbers 22:5 to 22:6 (see Notes to Num 22:38).

"and whomever you curse is accursed."

The *Leitmotif* of the present verse, and of much of the narrative and poetic sections of Numbers 22–24 (see Num 23:7, 24:9), is conveyed by the Hebrew verb *ʾ-r-r* "to execrate, curse" (variously *q-b-b*, with the same meaning). The form *ʾārāh* is the emphatic-imperative, singular, of which the regular form would be *ʾôr*. Compare the plural imperative in Judges 5:23: *ʾôrû Mērôz, ʾōrû ʾārôr yōšebêhā* "Execrate Meroz, strongly execrate her inhabitants!" The antonym of *ʾ-r-r* is *bērēk* "to bless." These two verbs express the tension between Balak and Balaam. Balak would like Israel to be cursed, and Balaam cannot do this.

The utilization of magical curses in ancient Near Eastern warfare and the practice of pronouncing execrations against enemies, disloyal vassals and treaty partners, as well as against towns that fail to pay tribute, will be discussed in the Comments. Balak's purpose is to weaken Israel, a force too numerous to be confronted militarily. This seems to be the sense of Hebrew *ʿāṣûm* used to characterize the Israelites. This meaning is suggested by Joel 1:6: *ʿāṣûm weʾên mispār* "multitudinous, without number." By implication, there is strength in numbers.

Balak has heard of Balaam's arts and has confidence in his capabilities. In the clause *weʾašer tāʾōr yûʾār* "and whomever you curse is accursed," the form *yûʾār* represents the internal Qal passive imperfect, not the Pual or the Hophal. The conventional view that this form represents the Hophal is improbable. Very often the Masoretes masked the internal Qal passive in their vocalizations.

7. *The Moabite elders departed together with the Midianite elders.* It is likely that the reference to the elders of Midian in this verse was interpolated by priestly writers, as was true in Numbers 22:4 above (see Notes to Num 22:4). The delegation is composed of *ziqnê Môʾāb* "the elders of Moab." Subsequently we read of *ha-anāšîm* "the men" (Num 22:20, 35), but more often of *śārîm*, translated "chieftains," variously chieftains of Moab and of Balak. The term *śār* has a wide range of functional connotations depending on context (see Notes to Num 21:18). Although the narrative of Numbers 22:2–21 projects a king of Moab, and one could, on that account, translate *śārîm* "princes," it may be more realistic historically to regard them as tribal leaders, similar to the status of the elders originally. Thus, in Jeremiah 26, the account of Jeremiah's trial in Jerusalem, it is clear that *śārê Yehûdāh* "the chieftains of Judah," although assigned to the royal palace, represented the people, and like them supported Jeremiah (Levine 1989b, 23, to Lev 4:15; H. Reviv 1989:111).

bearing with them payment for divination.

The emissaries are said to have brought *qesāmîm* with them. This term elsewhere occurs only as the direct object of the verb *q-s-m* "to divine" (Deut 18:10, 2 Kings 17:17), and it is therefore unclear how it is being used here. Some have suggested that the emissaries were bringing instruments of divination for Balaam's use. But why would they bring such instruments to Balaam's homeland, since Balaam wouldn't be using them until he arrived in Moab to perform his feats? We would rather expect Balaam to bring instruments of his own with him. Gray (Gray-*ICC*:329) is correct in proposing that the emissaries brought payment in advance for Balaam's service. That the same term may connote the act and its reward or its result is indicated, according to Gray, by 2 Samuel 4:10, where David states that he himself killed the one who brought him news of Saul's death "in place of giving him a reward for good tidings" (*ʾašer letittî lô beśōrāh*). Hebrew *beśōrāh* usually connotes the good tidings, themselves, just as *qesāmîm* usually means "divination." Similarly, *peʾūllāh* usually means "act, work," but in some instances it connotes the wages of work (Lev 19:13, Isa 40:10, 62:11 [// *śākār* "wage"], Ps 109:20). H. L. Ginsberg (1955) explains that *ʿāmāl* in Koheleth 1:3, 5:17 means "the reward of toil, wealth." It is also logical, of course, that Balak would want to entice Balaam to accept the assignment by showing him how profitable it would be. It should be noted, apropos of *qesāmîm,* that Balaam is designated a *qôsēm* "diviner" in Joshua 13:22, and that this is the only explicit title given him in the Hebrew Bible. In the Balaam inscriptions from Deir ʿAllah he is entitled *ḥzh ʾlhn* "a divine seer."

8. *"Spend the night here."* Aside from the fluctuation in choice of divine names between *YHWH* and *ʾElōhîm* in this and the verses to follow, a more important interpretive problem is ascertaining the basis of Balaam's response and of his actions. Why would a non-Israelite seer or diviner require the permission, or await the instructions of the God of Israel? Was Balaam the obedient servant of the God of Israel as Coats (1982) and others have advocated; did he decide to obey? Or was he coerced by the power of Israel's God, who compelled him to obey? Further on, in Numbers 22:18, Balaam actually identifies himself as a devotee of the God of Israel by referring to *YHWH ʾelōhay* "YHWH, my God." Did Balaam's relationship to the God of Israel develop in the course of the narrative? Are we being told, further, that if the efficacy of magic was controlled by the God of Israel? These questions will be addressed at length in the Comments. At this point, suffice it to say that the narrator, without explanation, has Balaam awaiting instructions from the God of Israel, unable to act on his own or any other authority.

9. *Who are these men with you?* The emissaries are called "the men" (*haʾanāšîm*) here, and in Numbers 22:20 below. The same term is used in identifying Moses' emissaries to Canaan in Numbers 13:2–3, 16. As there, the implication here is that the emissaries were important personages (see Notes to Num 13:2; Numbers 1–20:351). The author of the Tale of the Jenny appropriates this diction in Numbers 22:35, thereby linking his fable to the preceding narrative (Num 22:2–21). In a conversation initiated by God with humans, the deity proverbially poses rhetorical questions in order to communicate ef-

fectively. This narrative device was recognized by the Jewish sages. Thus, God asked Adam where he was hiding (Gen 3:9), as well as how he learned that he was naked and what he had eaten (Gen 3:11). In a similar way, God asked Cain where his brother, Abel, was (Gen 4:9). Here, God asks Balaam who the men are who came to see him.

10. *"Balak, the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent the following message to me."* In biblical Hebrew as well as in Aramaic, the verb *š-l-ḥ*, without a direct object, in itself bears the specialized connotation: "to send a message," oral or written (2 Sam 19:12, 2 Kings 14:9, Jer 29:28, Ezra 4:14, 5:17, 6:13). This specialized connotation is also characteristic of Akkadian *šapāru* "to send" in epistolary contexts (*CAD S* I:431, s.v. *šapāru*, meaning 2).

11–12. The earlier statement of Balak in Numbers 22:6 is paraphrased here. The emphatic-imperative *'ārāh* "curse," used in verse 6, is replaced here by *qābāh* "curse," also a cohortative-imperative form, predicated on the geminate verb *q-b-b* "to execrate, curse," repeated in Numbers 22:17, below. A geminate root is also predicated by the infinitive-construct form, *lāqōb* "to curse," in Numbers 23:11, 24:10. On other forms see, in addition to verses already cited, Numbers 23:8, 13, 27, 28. It seems that the narrator is playing on usual forms and variant morphological realizations in an effort to emphasize the theme of malediction, and to resonate with the diction of the poems.

Do not accompany them.

Balaam is forbidden by God to accompany the men for the purpose of cursing the people, for Israel is blessed. Again, the verb *'-r-r* "to curse" is employed.

13–14. Balaam instructs Balak's chieftains to return to their land because the God of Israel has refused to allow him to accompany them. The Hebrew verb *mē'ēn* "to refuse" implies, although this is never stated explicitly, that a request had been made by Balaam of the God of Israel to allow him to accept Balak's offer. Just as God refused (the verb *mē'ēn*), so do Balak's chieftains tell him that Balaam refused (the verb *mē'ēn*) to accompany them.

15–17. *'Do not be prevented from coming to me.'* Balak dispatches chieftains of higher rank, and offers Balaam greater incentives. The syntax of the verb *m-n-'* is consistent: *māna'* + *min-*"to prevent from," as is true whether or not a direct object is projected, and even in the Niphal stem.

'For I shall reward you exceedingly.'

The Piel *kibbēd* at times suggests bestowing gifts, a sense that would be most appropriate here, particularly in light of the following verse, and appropriate generally in the Balaam narrative (Num 22:37, 24:11, and cf. Judg 9:9, 13:17, 1 Sam 2:29, Prov 3:9, Dan 11:38 for the proposed meaning). For a discussion of the Ugaritic cognate *kbd*, see Levine and de Tarragon (1993). Once again, the operative word for cursing is the root *q-b-b*, resuming the diction of Numbers 22:11, above.

18. *Balaam responded by saying to Balak's courtiers.* Gross (1974) and others have noted the differing terms of reference for Balak's emissaries: *malʾākîm* "messengers," *zeqēnîm* "elders," *śārîm* "chieftains," *ʾanāšîm* "men, personages," and here: *ʿabādîm* "servants, courtiers." Balaam rejects Balak's offer in a somewhat proverbial manner, referring to *kesep wezāhāb* "silver and gold," and using a merism: *qeṭannāh ʾô gedôlāh*, literally: "small or large," namely, "anything at all."

19–20. *"Now then, as for you—you remain lodged here tonight, as well."* Once again, there is the customary overnight waiting period, so that Balaam can experience a second nocturnal communication from the God of Israel. God visits Balaam and grants him permission to accept the men's invitation, admonishing him to perform only what he is told.

21. *So Balaam arose on the morrow.* There has been considerable discussion as to whether verse 21 begins the Tale of the Jenny, or whether the tale begins in verse 22. The evidence of diction, as well as compositional analysis, favor the view that verse 21 concludes the previous section of the narrative, as proposed by Rouillard (1985:115–121), anticipated by Gray (Gray-*ICC*:309). Rofé (1981), and others, note that the Tale of the Jenny concludes in Numbers 22:35b with a postscript, reporting that Balaam left in the company of Balak's chieftains, of whom there is no explicit mention in Numbers 22:22–35a (see Notes to Num 22:35). In a similar manner, we would expect the primary narrative to conclude in Numbers 22:21b with a postscript, reporting that Balaam accompanied the chieftains of Moab. Further on, Numbers 24 similarly concludes with the report that Balaam arose to return to his place (Num 24:25). All of these postscripts, formulated in similar wording (*wayyāqom* . . . *wayyēlek* "He arose . . . to go") are conventional ways of bringing sections of narrative accounts to a close by signaling movement from one place to another (cf. Num 23:6).

To sustain this compositional analysis one is more or less compelled, however, to assume a "hinge" in Numbers 22:22, whereby the name of Balaam has been replaced by a personal pronoun, *hûʾ* "he." Originally, verse 22 may have read as follows:

wayyiḥar ʾap ʾelōhîm k̂i hōlēk Bilʿām
"Thereupon, God became enraged that Bileam was going."

By excising Balaam's name from verse 22, a redactor made Balaam of verse 21 the antecedent of the personal pronoun *hûʾ* "he" early in verse 22. Similarly, Numbers 22:35b serves as an inclusio, bracketing the independent Tale of the Jenny.

What is said of Balaam's actions in verse 21 resonates with Genesis 22:1–19, the narrative of Abraham's journey to Mount Moriah to sacrifice his son, Isaac. J. Safren (1988) probably goes too far in proposing that the Tale of the Jenny was consciously written as a mirror story of Abraham's journey, especially since Numbers 22:21 is not actually part of it, but he is hardly the first to note a unique combination linking Genesis 22:3 and Numbers 22:21: In both sources we have the recipient of a divine communication arising early in the morning (the Hebrew verb *hiškîm*) and promptly saddling (the verb *ḥ-b-š*) an animal; a *ḥamōr* "mule" (not "donkey") in Genesis, and an *ʾatōn* "jenny" in Numbers. It is also relevant that both Abraham and Balaam took two squires along on the trip (Gen 22:3, Num 22:22), although this was probably common practice (cf. 2 Kings 5:23).

NOTES TO NUMBERS 22:22–35: THE TALE OF THE JENNY

The literary function of the Tale of the Jenny was to mock Balaam. It has already been noted that Numbers 22:22, in stating how God was enraged that Balaam was accompanying unidentified persons, called *hāʾanāšîm* "the men" in Numbers 22:35a, directly contradicts Numbers 22:20, where he is given permission to accompany "the men" (*hāʾanāšîm*). Beyond these contradictions, the tale ridicules Balaam most effectively: The noted clairvoyant cannot see what his jenny saw! After all, even ordinary mortals were able to see divine messengers, and most assuredly prophets could see them. There is, therefore, considerable logic to the often voiced contention that the author of the Tale of the Jenny has endorsed the later negative casting of Balaam to be inferred from several biblical references to him, and from some postbiblical traditions, as well. Whereas Micah 6:5, in line with the earlier positive view, recalls Balaam's blessings over Israel, Deuteronomy (23:5–6) marks a turning point. In a law forbidding marriages with Ammonites and Moabites, the text strongly implies that, for himself, Balaam sought to curse Israel but that the God of Israel prevented him from carrying out his desire, and converted his curses into blessings. This view is echoed quite clearly in Joshua 24:9–10. Numbers 31:8, part of the later priestly contribution to Numbers, adopts this negative evaluation of Balaam, and pointedly records that Balaam was slain together with the five kings of Midian. Going further, Numbers 31:16 charges Balaam with the plan to entrap Israel into betraying its God by wooing Israelite men into the pagan worship of Baal-Peor. Joshua 13:22, in its review of early history, also makes a point of recording the slaying of Balaam, who is called *qôsēm* "diviner," hardly a positive label in biblical literature (cf. Neh 13:2). And so, it is entirely possible that the Tale of the Jenny is predicated on the negative evaluation of Balaam introduced in Deuteronomy. This subject is treated in Notes to Numbers 31:8, and in the Comments on Numbers 22–24.

Based on what has been said above, in Notes to Numbers 22:21, and here, it should be possible to show how the author of this picaresque tale effectively integrated his pejorative characterization of Balaam into the primary historiography of the Balaam Pericope, where Balaam is depicted positively as a gifted magical practitioner who became a devotee of the God of Israel. Taking a cue from Numbers 22:21, this author has Balaam riding a jenny (Num 22:22, et passim), and finally gaining permission to accompany "the men" (*hā'anāšîm*) in Numbers 22:35a (cf. Num 22:20). Perhaps aware of the resonance with Genesis 22:3 in Numbers 2:21, the author of the tale refers to two squires in Numbers 22:22. In Numbers 22:35a, the author returns the reader to the situation obtaining before the tale commenced, so that Balaam once again has permission to accompany those sent to get him, with the proviso, resonating with Numbers 22:20, that he speak only what God told him.

22. *God became enraged.* God is enraged that Balaam has gone with the men, and stations an angel on the road as an adversary. But one has to supply this act of God, since, as the text reads, God is angry, and the next thing we know the angel has already "stationed himself" (*wayyityaṣṣēb*) on the road. In Genesis 3:24, God actively "positioned" (*wayyăskēn*) the Cherubs and the revolving sword blade to prevent the re-entry of Adam and Eve into the Garden of Eden. The Hithpael, *hityaṣṣēb*, elsewhere describes the posture of divine beings in theophany (Exod 34:5, 1 Sam 3:10), just as it describes attendance upon divine beings (1 Sam 10:19, Deut 31:14, Job 1:6, 2:1, and by extension, Exod 14:13, 2 Chron 20:17). As is often true of accounts of angelic revelations, the present story is narrated in a way that blurs the identities of God and of his divine messenger. The Hebrew *leśāṭān lo* "confronting him as an adversary" is restated below, in verse 32, where we read: "It was I, after all, who came forth as an adversary (*leśāṭān*)." The primary biblical occurrences of the noun *sāṭān*, whose derivation is uncertain, occur in a military or political context. Thus, foreign kings like Hadad the Edomite (1 Kings 11:14), and Rezon the Aramaean (1 Kings 11:23) each became an adversary (*śāṭān*) of Solomon, who previously had stated (1 Kings 5:3) that there was no *śāṭān* around to threaten him. Most likely, the related verbal and other forms are denominatives, as is suggested by Zechariah 3:1: "The Adversary (*haśśāṭān*) was standing at his right side to malign him (*leśiṭnô*)." The diction of the Tale of the Jenny does not define the common noun *śāṭān* with the definite article as is true in Zechariah and in the prologue to Job (Job 1:7, et passim), nor does it treat Satan as a proper noun, a feature actually unattested in the Hebrew Bible. In this respect, the Tale of the Jenny correlates with the diction of the late, preexilic historical books, rather than with postexilic literature (but see below in Notes to Num 22:30). Usage of Hebrew *na'ar* in the sense of "squire, arms-bearer" is well known (1 Sam 20:38, 2 Sam 9:9, 18:15).

23. *stationed on the road.* Hebrew *niṣṣāb badderek* "stationed on the road" resonates with *wayyityaṣṣēb badderek* "he stationed himself on the road" in verse 22, a nuance resumed in Numbers 22:31, below, where the incident is retold. Usage of the Hebrew verb *š-l-p* is restricted to unsheathing a sword, except for taking off one's shoe symbolically (Ruth 4:7–8). Of the divine commander who confronted Joshua it is also said: *weḥarbô šelûpāh beyādô* "his sword was unsheathed in his hand" (Jos 5:13), as it is of the destroying angel whom David saw in the Chronicler's version of 2 Samuel 24 (1 Chron 21:16). The comparison with the scene depicted in Joshua 5:13–15 might also suggest a late preexilic or early postexilic date for the Tale of the Jenny, since Joshua 5:13–15 belong to the primary stratum of the Book of Joshua.

she swerved from the road

The verb *n-ṭ-h,* here "to turn aside," reveals two aspects, transitive and stative, as well as a broad semantic range (see Notes to Num 24:6). As a stative, it often has the specialized meaning of turning off the road (as in Num 22:26, 33, below).

24–27. *The angel of YHWH then halted in the narrow path of the vineyards.* Unique Hebrew *mišʿôl* "narrow path" derives from *šaʿal* "the cupped palm of the hand" (Isa 40:12), and by extension "a small measure, handful," said of grain (Ezek 13:19) or of soil (1 Kings 20:10).

fenced in on both sides.

Hebrew *gādēr* properly designates a stone wall built around vineyards, or sections thereof, to keep out trampling animals, a wall that may be "breached" (the verb *pāraṣ,* as in Isa 5:5). Thus, *gādēr* of verse 24 is replaced by *qîr* "wall" in verse 25 (cf. Ps 62:4). As Balaam began his ride astride his jenny he was still in a field, so that the jenny could avert the threatening angel by turning off the road (*derek*). But as Balaam proceeded further, he entered a narrow path, *mišʿôl,* cutting through a vineyard and bounded on both sides by a stone wall. At that point, all the jenny could do was to press up (the Hebrew verb *l-ḥ-ṣ*) against the wall. But the path became even more confining, as the angel moved on, stopping in an especially narrow part of the *mišʿôl,* where even such movement was impossible.

she crouched down under Balaam.

When the jenny saw the angel of God, she "crouched down" under Balaam. This is the sense of Hebrew *r-b-ṣ,* a verb with specialized usage. There is a subtlety here that allows us to interpret the jenny's crouching down as a form of prostration before the angel, or perhaps she crouched down in order to await his command. Assuredly, she did not crouch down merely because she could not move forward. What is more, it would seem from the way the tale is narrated that the jenny did not crouch down under Balaam's blows, of which the last round came only after the jenny had so postured herself. Hebrew *r-b-ṣ* normally connotes a restful natural activity for animals while they are grazing, or after they have been rounded up, although we once find a law making reference to a mule crouching under the weight of a burden in Exodus 23:5. Three times Balaam had struck the animal, harder and harder, with his *maqqēl* "rod, walking stick," a probable phonetic variant of *bql*, a cognate of Akkadian *baqlu* (*AHw*:105). The *maqqēl* of biblical times was usually made of wood (Gen 30:37, Jer 1:11).

What is being described is progressive movement from a road that cut through a field, to a path cutting through a vineyard, and finally, to a very narrow part of the vineyard path. This suggests that, whereas the verbs *niṣṣab* and *hityaṣṣēb* mean "to be stationed; to station one's self," Hebrew *ʿ-m-d* means "to halt," not "to stand," in the usual sense. Thus, in verse 26, *ʿ-md* contrasts with *ʿ-b-r* "to move on, pass by." In other words, the angel moved on, and then halted in a narrow place. This is the connotation of Hebrew *ʿ-m-d* in any number of biblical passages, and may, in fact, be its primary sense (Gen 30:9, Exod 33:9, Jos 10:13, Jer 46:21). In effect, the angel had led Balaam into a trap, a blind alley, to a point where a confrontation was inevitable. Balaam was a man literally in straits, and blocked from moving forward. He undoubtedly thought that his jenny was being stubborn!

28–30. The dialogue between the jenny and her master is fascinating, not only phenomenologically, but because of what the jenny does not say. She does not inform Balaam as to why she was behaving as she was, but rather appeals to Balaam's gratitude for her long service to him. It was left to the angel to enlighten Balaam!

YHWH opened the jenny's mouth

When God opens the jenny's mouth, she can speak, which is to say that although the jenny had always possessed a mouth, she did not possess the power of speech until God endowed her with it. As it is written in Exodus 4:11: "Then YHWH said to him (= Moses): 'Who grants humans the power of speech; or who makes one dumb or deaf, or sighted or blind? Is it not I, YHWH?' " The verb *p-t-ḥ* thus has an enhanced connotation, that of enabling speech. Speech comes naturally to humans, but not, of course, to animals, who are given this exceptional faculty in fables. The ability of humans and animals to converse with each other is also fabulous.

"these three times?"

The Hebrew demonstrative, *zeh*, has emphatic force, as if to say: "Until now, all of" three times. Cf. Gen 27:36: *wayyaʿaqbēnî zeh paʿamāyim* "for he has sneaked up on me even a second time." The Hebrew *šālôš regālîm* "three times" occurs elsewhere only in Exodus 23:14, where it also means "three times," but in the functional sense of "three pilgrimages." This rare idiom is replaced further on in Exodus 23:17 by *šālōš peʿāmîm* "three times," but it is noteworthy that Hebrew *paʿam*, in the sense of "time," also derives from the meaning "sole of the foot, foot beat" (Isa 26:6, 2 Kings 19:24, Song of Songs

7:2). Surely the repeated use of an idiom known elsewhere only in the context of annual pilgrimage festivals is not coincidental in the Tale of the Jenny. Can it possibly allude to the perception by the author that Balaam's journey was a mission undertaken at divine command, or with divine endorsement? This subtlety gains credibility in verse 32, below, as the angel excuses his confrontational posture by explaining that his "mission" (*derek*) was pressing upon him. So, both Balaam and the angel had set out on their respective missions; the angel to bind Balaam to God's command before allowing him to continue, and Balaam to foil Balak's plan by pronouncing providential blessings over Israel (see Notes to Num 22:32).

"Because you have tormented me."

Balaam, in his lack of perception, accuses the jenny of tormenting or torturing him, adding that he was angry enough to have slain her, had he held a sword in his arm. Hebrew *hitʿallēl* usually connotes physical torture or mutilation as might be inflicted by an enemy (Judg 19:25, 1 Sam 31:4).

"Have I ever before sought to gain an advantage?"

The precise sense of Hiphil *hahaskēn hiskantî* in Numbers 22:30 remains elusive. The translation "Have I ever before sought to gain an advantage-" is merely an educated guess. Use of the Hiphil, *hiskîn*, in Psalm 139:3 suggests the sense of monitoring or controlling. After stating that God knows his every move, the Psalmist goes on to say: "My travels and my residences you have overseen (*hiskantā*)." The verb *s-k-n* in the Qal stem seems to mean "to gain control, to gain an advantage" (Job 15:3, 22:2, 21, 34:9, 35:3). It is likely that all verbal usages are denominative of *sōkēn* "agent, governor" (Isa 22:15), *sōkenet* "caretaker" (1 Kings 1:2, 4), a cognate of Akkadian *šaknu* "imperial governor," reflected in Late Hebrew *segān* "chief" (*CAD* S 1:180, s.v. *šaknu*; Isa 41:25, Jer 51:23, Neh 4:8, 13, and so forth; Levy 1963 III:475–476, s.v. *segen, segān*). The term *ʿārê miskenôt* "distribution depots" (Exod 1:11) expresses the same notion of control. In other words, the Hiphil form *hiskîn* would mean to do what the *sōkēn* does.

31. *At that moment YHWH uncovered Balaam's eyes.* To enable one to see what had been hidden from his view is "to uncover" his eyes, expressed by the verb *g-l-h*. Thus, Balaam says of himself that he has dream visions, but also those experienced by one "whose eyes are opened" (Num 24:4, and see Notes to Num 24:4).

He bowed prostrate on his face.

When Balaam is enabled to see the armed angel, he immediately recognizes him as such, and prostrates himself. The verb *hištaḥawāh* "to bow down, prostrate one's self" had been derived from the root *š-ḥ-h* "to be low," with the Hithpael connoting the reflexive action. But this left the *waw* to be explained in the third person, singular inverted form: *wayyištaḥû (wyštḥw)*. It is more likely that the sense of prostration derives from a root *ḥ-w-y* "to strike," with cognates in Ugaritic and Aramaic. In fact, *ḥ-w-y* emerges as an Egypto-Semitic root, written in hieroglyphics with a postpositive determinative, showing a man raising his rod to strike. In such terms, the form *hištaḥawāh* would represent the Hishtaphel (Št), with reflexive force: "to strike one's self down" (*HALAT*:283–284, s.v. *ḥ-w-h* II)

32–33. *for the mission was pressing upon me.* The angel enlightens Balaam, after first chastising him. He had set out to block Balaam, he says, *kî yāraṭ hadderek lenegdî,* translated: "for the mission was pressing upon me." This is only a guess at the meaning of the text, because the verb *y-r-ṭ* occurs elsewhere only tentatively in Job 16:11–12: "El handed me over to evil doers; by means of wicked persons he cast me down (*yirṭēnî*). I had been at peace (*šālēw*), but he tossed me about and seized me by my nape, and shook me up (?), and set me up as a target." Gray (Gray-*ICC*:336) cites the Arabic cognate *wariṭa* "to be thrown, cast headlong," which surely fits the context of the passage in Job, although it is a stative verb.

Hebrew *derek* most often means "road," but in certain contexts it means "voyage, mission" like Akkadian *ḫarrānu* (*CAD Ḫ*:106, s.v. *ḫarrānu*). Thus, in 1 Samuel 21:6, *wehû’ derek ḥōl* probably means: "even though it was an ordinary mission," namely, one that did not require David's soldiers to retain their ritual purity. They would have been required to do so had they been on a holy mission. In other words, the angel had no other way of stopping Balaam from accompanying the men before he could admonish him to speak only what he was told. In the idiom *’ûlay nāṭetāh* "had she not turned aside" adverbial *’ûlay* suggests the negative, which would be unique in biblical usage, since *’ûlay* always functions as a conditional with positive implication. The sense here is that of *lûlē’* "had one not, were it not," which Gray suggests reading (see *HALAT*:498, s.v. *lûlē’*). An angel with sword drawn can be expected to slay anyone who attempts to pass him (see Notes to Num 22:22–23, above). Ironically, the jenny would not have been slain in such an encounter, as she was only an animal!

34. *"I have offended!"* Balaam promptly admits his fault, and explains that he did not know the angel was confronting him on the road. Balaam agrees to go back.

35. *Go with these men.* The angel instructs Balaam to accompany "the men" (*hā’anāšîm*), but to speak only what he is told. Reference to "the men" brings the reader back to Numbers 22:20, to the situation that obtained before the Tale of the Jenny intruded on events. Just as Numbers 22:21, in concluding the first narrative section (Num 22:2–21), reported that Balaam accompanied the "chieftains of Moab," the second part of the present verse, Numbers 22:35b, rejoins the text to what preceded the Tale of the Jenny by reporting that Balaam accompanied "the chieftains of Balak." This is what is meant by "hinging."

NOTES TO NUMBERS 22:36–41: BALAAM AS BALAK'S HIRED DIVINER

36. *When Balak heard that Balaam was coming.* Balak went out to meet Balaam at *ʿÎr Môʾab,* literally "the town of Moab," presumably its capital. As Gray (Gray-*ICC*:286) and others have noted, however, the present geographical description fits in with what we read in Numbers 21:13–15, 28, Deuteronomy 2:18, and Isaiah 15:1, where undoubtedly the same site is written *ʿĀr (Môʾāb).* In fact, Hebrew *ʿîr* may have been realized in Moabite as *ʿār,* given the plural. *ʿārîm.* In all cases, reference is to a town on the Moabite-Amorite border at the upper course of the Arnon (see Notes to Num 21:13, and Map 1).

[and] which is at the [nearest] extremity of the border.

Hebrew *qāṣeh,* in geographical descriptions, seems to refer to the nearest contact point, as seen by the eye of the beholder. Thus, in Numbers 20:16, Moses tells the king of Edom that the Israelites are encamped at Kadesh *ʿîr qeṣēh gebûlekā* "a town bordering on your territory," more precisely, a town at the extremity of Edomite territory nearest the Israelite encampment (see Notes to Num 20:16; Levine 1993:91–92). One may compare usage of *qāṣeh* in Joshua 3:8, 15, where we read that the waters of the Jordan split as soon as the feet of the priests were dipped in its waters, expressed as: *ʿad qeṣēh mê hayyardēn* "up to the edge of the waters of the Jordan," or *biqeṣēh hammayim* "at the water's edge," namely, where the waters began. This is the sense of *qeṣēh hāʿām* "the [nearest] extremity of the people," in Numbers 22:41, an interpretation reinforced by the qualified statement in Numbers 23:13: *ʾepes qāṣēhû tirʾeh wekūllô lōʾ tirʾeh* "You will see only its [nearest] extremity, but you will not see all of it." In the present instance, Balaam was coming from the east, or the northeast, so that from that perspective, one would speak of the upper courses of the Arnon as being the nearest extremity of the Moabite border to him. There has been speculation as to whether the place of Balak's meeting with Balaam, as reported here, informs us as to where Balaam was coming from. Actually, it does not. Balaam could have been coming from afar, or he could have been coming from Ammon, for that matter. It was simply proper for the king of Moab to greet his guest at the border of his own country, which, at the time, was marked by the Arnon.

37–38. *"Now then: Can I really make any pronouncement?"* In this repartee, Balak rebukes Balaam for his earlier refusal to accept the invitation, emphasizing his readiness to reward Balaam profusely. For his part, Balaam acknowledges his powerlessness, now that he has come, thereby lowering Balak's expectations at the outset. The problem that some commentators have found in the phrasing of the present verse can be avoided if the proper function of adverbial *ʿattāh* "now," is understood. In the Notes to Numbers 22:6, above, this function was explained against the background of epistolary style. It is quite certain, therefore, that here, adverbial *ʿattah* begins a new statement rather than emphasizing a contrast of "then" and "now."

39. *and they arrived at Kiriath-Huzoth.* The toponym *Kiryat-Ḥuṣṣôt,* literally "the town of markets," occurs only here, and remains unidentified unless it is a variant of Kiriathaim (Num 32:37, Jer 48:1, 23), a town north of the Arnon. Balaam repeatedly sought venues overlooking the Israelite encampment, such as the summit of Pisgah (Num 23:14), and, more immediately, Bamoth Baal, just north of the Arnon (see Notes to Num 21:28, 22:1). Numbers 23:28 informs us that "the summit of Peor" (*rōʾš Peʿôr*) afforded Balaam a view of "the wilderness" (*hayyešîmōn*). Since the same was said about the summit of Pisgah in Numbers 23:14, the two sites may be close to each other. Similarly, a toponym compounded from *Peʿôr,* like *Bêt-Peʿôr,* was presumably located in the same area. It is questionable how precisely the location of the Israelite encampment can be pinpointed.

40. *Balaam sacrificed oxen and sheep.* As Balaam takes up his role in Balak's employ, there are any number of sacrifices offered, but the one reported in the present verse seems to be of a different character, unrelated to Balaam's efforts. Balak simply prepared a feast in honor of Balaam, and sent portions of the slaughtered sheep and cattle to Balaam and the chieftains who were with him. Usage of the verb *z-b-ḥ* is not limited to cultic offerings. It is denominative of *zebaḥ* "meal." The texts implies that Balak and Balaam were spending the night in different quarters.

41. *When morning came, Balak took Balaam up to Bamoth-Baal.* Bamoth Baal is identical with *Bāmôt Baʿal ʾArnôn* "Bamoth-Baal-on-Arnon," the suggested reading in the Heshbon Ballad (Num 21:28), replacing Masoretic *baʿalê bāmôt ʾArnôn* (see Notes to Num 21:28). This site would have been located just north of the Arnon. From there, Balaam could view the nearest extremity of the Israelite camp.

INTRODUCTION TO NUMBERS 23

Balaam is now at Bamoth Baal where he can see the nearest extremity of the Israelite encampment. Numbers 23 relates that three times Balaam erected altars and performed sacrifices in different venues (Num 23:1–4, 14–17, 29–30). The function of the sacrifices ordered by Balaam requires explanation on at least two levels. There is, first of all, the matter of the roles enacted by Balaam other than the forensic role, the actual speeches he declaimed, or curses he was supposed to pronounce. How did sacrificing fit into Balaam's undertakings? Corollary to this is the need to explain the particular type of offering utilized by Balaam to attract the God of Israel and thereby receive a communication from him. Why the *ʿōlāh* "burnt offering?" It is now possible to address these issues effectively, based on our understanding of Israelite sacrifice. The major discussion of this subject will be reserved for the Comments, but some interpretation is required here by way of introduction.

It was typical of any number of different kinds of ancient Near Eastern magical practitioners to use more than one technique or method in the performance of their arts. It must be understood that magic was under the control of the gods; it was effective only if and when it was authorized by one or another god. Contrary to common notions of magical coercion of the gods, it was rather divine will that gave magic its potency. Thus, the Mesopotamian *āšipu*, or exorcist, combined sacrifices and incantations in his performance, and this was true of the Namburbi magician, as well as several types of Hittite and Egyptian magicians. Sacrifice, presented as a gift to the gods, induced divine powers to accede to the petitions of magical practitioners and to issue the requisite orders. This concept is discussed by Levine and de Tarragon (1987) in their edition of Ugaritic magical texts dealing with snakebite. The *ʿōlāh* "burnt offering" appears to have been especially well suited to the objective of attraction. The magician had to attract the attention of the gods in order to present his petition; in fact, he had to induce them to draw near, to be present, because only in this way could he hope for a response. The *ʿōlāh*, whose aromatic smoke ascended heavenward and was inhaled by the deity, functioned as a trial run. If the deity was well disposed to the invocation, he accepted the *ʿōlāh*, responded to the worshipper, and came to him. This is why, in composite rites including a series of sacrifices, the *ʿōlāh* was consistently offered first (Levine 1974:22–27).

The terms of Balaam's performance had been set in Numbers 22. He could speak only the words that the God of Israel placed in his mouth. But, how were God's words to be communicated and received? This process is described in Numbers 23. Balaam would perambulate in the immediate vicinity of the altars until he "connected," so to speak. Normally, gods appear to their worshippers only at consecrated sites, such as altars and sanctuaries. The altars had been built, and sacrifices offered on them, so that Balaam might move about in their immediate area and receive communications from the God of Israel. In effect, we see in Numbers 23 the interaction of cultic and prophetic notions of divine response in a way that is somewhat unusual within biblical literature. The possible significance of perambulation, of walking about seeking divine communication, will be explored in Notes to Numbers 23:3, just below.

In phenomenological terms, it remains to explain the significance of visual contact in the pronouncement of curses, and of blessings, too. Twice Balak suggests changing Balaam's vantage point. In one case (Num 23:13) the presumption is that seeing the entire Israelite encampment had overwhelmed

Balaam. If he were to see only part of the encampment, he might find it possible to pronounce an effective curse. In the second case (Num 23:27), the presumption is that a change of vantage point might induce the God of Israel to allow a curse, even though Balaam had stated that the God of Israel would not permit this. The role of the visual factor in the efficacy of magic, and the weight of subjective reactions on the part of seers and diviners, will be explored in the Comments.

TRANSLATION

23 [1]Then Balaam said to Balak: "Build me at this site seven altars, and prepare for me at this site seven bulls and seven rams."

[2]Balak did as Balaam instructed, and Balak and Balaam offered up a bull and a ram on each altar.

[3]Balaam then said to Balak: "Station yourself near your burnt offering, while I move about. Perhaps YHWH will take the occasion to encounter me, and reveal some word to me of which I may inform you." He walked away silently.

[4]God did take the occasion to encounter Balaam, and *the latter* said to him: "I have set up the seven altars and have offered up a bull and a ram on each altar."

[5]YHWH placed a word in Balaam's mouth, and instructed him: Return to Balak and speak accordingly.

[6]He returned to him, and behold, he was stationed near his burnt offering, he and all the chieftains of Moab.

[7]In a raised voice he recited his balanced verse, speaking:

מִן־אֲרָם יַנְחֵנִי בָלָק, מֶלֶךְ־מוֹאָב מֵהַרְרֵי־קֶדֶם.
לְכָה אָרָה־לִּי יַעֲקֹב, וּלְכָה זֹעֲמָה יִשְׂרָאֵל.
מָה אֶקֹּב לֹא קַבֹּה אֵל, וּמָה אֶזְעֹם לֹא זָעַם יהוֹה?
כִּי־מֵרֹאשׁ צֻרִים אֶרְאֶנּוּ, וּמִגְּבָעוֹת אֲשׁוּרֶנּוּ,
הֶן־עָם לְבָדָד יִשְׁכֹּן וּבַגּוֹיִם לֹא יִתְחַשָּׁב.
מִי מָנָה עֲפַר יַעֲקֹב, וּמִ(י) סָפַר אֶת־רֹבַע יִשְׂרָאֵל?
תָּמֹת נַפְשִׁי מוֹת יְשָׁרִים, וּתְהִי אַחֲרִיתִי כָּמֹהוּ.

"From Aram did Balak import me; the king of Moab—from the
mountains of Qedem.
Come, execrate Jacob for me; and come, pronounce Israel's doom!

[8]How can I curse whom El has not condemned, and how can I doom whom YHWH has not doomed?
[9]As I behold him from mountain tops, and as I gaze upon him from hills; It is truly a people encamped apart, and unallied with other nations.
[10]Who can chart the terrain of Jacob, and who can measure Israel's quarterland?
May I die the death of the valiant, and let my afterlife be as his!"

[11]Then Balak said to Balaam: "What have you done to me? I engaged you to maledict my enemies, but, behold, you have most surely pronounced blessings!"

[12]He answered saying: "Is it not what YHWH places in my mouth that I must take care to speak?"

[13]Balak said to him: "Come, now, with me to another site, from where you can see him. You will be able to see only the [nearest] edge of him, but you will not see all of him. Maledict him for me from there."

[14]So he took him to Lookout Plateau, to the peak of Pisgah, where he built seven altars and offered up a bull and a ram on each altar.

[15]He said to Balak: "Station yourself here near your burnt offering, and as for me, I will seek an occasional encounter hereabouts."

[16]YHWH took the occasion to encounter Balaam, and placed an oracle in his mouth, and instructed him: Return to Balak and speak accordingly.

[17]He came upon him, and behold, he was stationed near his burnt offering in the company of the Moabite chieftains. Then Balak addressed him: "What has YHWH spoken?"

[18]In a raised voice he recited his balanced verse, speaking:

קוּם בָּלָק וּשְׁמָע! הַאֲזִינָה עָדַי בְּנוֹ צִפֹּר!
לֹא אִישׁ אֵל וִיכַזֵּב, וּבֶן־אָדָם וְיִתְנֶחָם.
הַהוּא אָמַר וְלֹא יַעֲשֶׂה, וְדִבֶּר וְלֹא יְקִימֶנָּה?
הִנֵּה בָרֵךְ לָקָחְתִּי וּבֵרֵךְ וְלֹא אֲשִׁיבֶנָּה.
לֹא־הִבִּיט אָוֶן בְּיַעֲקֹב, וְלֹא־רָאָה עָמָל בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל.
יהוה אֱלֹהָיו עִמּוֹ, וּתְרוּעַת מֶלֶךְ בּוֹ.
אֵל מוֹצִיאָם מִמִּצְרָיִם כְּתוֹעֲפֹת רְאֵם לוֹ.
כִּי לֹא־נַחַשׁ בְּיַעֲקֹב, וְלֹא קֶסֶם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל.
כָּעֵת יֵאָמֵר לְיַעֲקֹב, וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל מַה־פָּעַל אֵל.
הֶן־עָם לְבָדָד יָקוּם, וְכַאֲרִי יִתְנַשָּׂא.
לֹא יִשְׁכַּב עַד־יֹאכַל טֶרֶף, וְדַם־חֲלָלִים יִשְׁתֶּה.

Arise Balak, take heed! Give ear to me, Zippor's own son!
[19]El is no human that he would fail, nor a mortal man that he would renege.
Would he promise and not perform? Ordain, and not fulfill it?
[20]*I was summoned* to bless, and bless [I must]; I cannot revoke it!
[21]He does not countenance any harm to Jacob; he brooks no wrong against Israel.
YHWH, his God, is at his side; the battle cry of the King is [heard] in his midst.
[22]El, who liberated him from Egypt, has horns like a wild ox.
[23]For there is no augury in Jacob, no divination in Israel.
Jacob is promptly informed; Israel—what El plans to do.
[24]Truly, he is a people who rises up like a lion; like a lion—he leaps up high.
He will not repose until he has prey to devour, until he drinks the blood of the slain.

[25]Then Balak said to Balaam: "Neither pronounce a malediction over him, nor pronounce a blessing over him."

[26]In response, Balaam said to Balak: "Did I not tell you explicitly that whatever YHWH commands I must do?"

[27]Then Balak said to Balaam: "Come, then, let me take you to another site. Perhaps it will be regarded as proper in God's sight that you maledict him for me from there."

[28]So, Balak took Balaam to the summit of Peor that overlooks the wasteland.

[29]Then Balaam said to Balak: "Build for me here seven altars, and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams."

[30]Balak did as Balaam instructed, and offered up a bull and a ram on each altar.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 23:1–6: BALAAM IN BALAK'S EMPLOY (CONTINUED)

1. *"Build me at this site."* Hebrew *bāzeh* is a near demonstrative, hence: "at this site" (cf. Gen 38:21–22, 1 Sam 9:11). Both small and large cattle are represented in Balak's sacrifices, and the number seven is to be taken as schematic.

2. *and Balak and Balaam offered up.* Here, Balak and Balaam jointly offer

the required animal sacrifices, whereas subsequently it is Balak, alone, who is the sacrificer, or at least the one on whose behalf the sacrifices are offered. This is only logical: Balak is the official, the one requesting divine authority to curse Israel. Balaam is working on Balak's behalf (see further, in Notes to Num 23:3, 15). Here it is not stipulated what type of sacrifice was offered, but in the following verse, Numbers 23:3, it is specified as an *ʿōlāh*.

3. *"Station yourself."* The verb *hityaṣṣēb* "to station one's self" has been already encountered in the Tale of the Jenny, where it was noted that this verb is used to characterize the stance of those in attendance upon deities, as is the case here (see Notes to Num 22:22). To understand the phenomenology of Hebrew *ʿōlāh*, a term deriving from the verb *ʿ-l-h* "to ascend," we should attempt to identify who or what it is that ascends. The *ʿōlāh* was burnt to ashes on the altar, and it was the flame ascending heavenward that most likely accounts for its name. The basic code of practice governing the *ʿōlāh* is prescribed in Leviticus 1 (Levine 1989b:3–4). The role of the *ʿōlāh* in the Balaam undertakings is especially significant, because it helps to explain the overall phenomenology of this offering, as noted in the Introduction to Numbers 23.

"while I move about."

The matter of perambulation is more difficult to explain. This is the only instance in biblical literature where we read that one seeking to attract the God of Israel walks about so as to receive a communication from him. As told in 1 Kings 18:36, Elijah approached the altar he had constructed and there called upon the God of Israel to respond. Perhaps Balaam's perambulation is related to the practice of augury, Hebrew *nehāšîm*. Numbers 24:1 informs us that before his fourth poetic oration, Balaam did not go about "in search of omens" (*liqraʾt neḥāšîm*), as he had each previous time. Usage of the verb *h-l-k* "to walk, go" links 1 Kings 18:36 to Numbers 24:1, allowing us, perhaps, to conclude that the occasional encounters of which Balaam spoke were for the purpose of receiving omens. After all, in his second poetic oration Balaam states that *naḥaš* "augury" has no place in Israel's experience. Not only does Israel have no need of it, but it is ineffectual against Israel (see Notes to Num 23:23, and Num 24:1).

"Perhaps YHWH will take the occasion to encounter me"

The Hebrew verb *q-r-h,* in the Niphal stem, is used here and repeatedly in Numbers 23:4, 16–17, to convey the occasional, perhaps unscheduled, human-divine communications experienced by Balaam. Moses in Egypt is instructed to tell Pharaoh that "YHWH, God of the Hebrews, has taken the occasion to encounter us" (*niqrāh ʿālênû*; Exod 3:18). In that instance, as well, use of the Niphal, *niqrāh,* comes in the context of contact between Israelites and foreign groups, and may be intended to represent non-Israelite perceptions of divine communication. More will be said on this subject in the Comments.

He walked away silently.

The Hebrew idiom *wayyēlek šepî* is unique in biblical literature, and its precise meaning remains uncertain. Hebrew *šepî* has been translated "silently," reflecting a relatively rare verb, *š-p-h* "to be calm, silent, smooth," also known in Aramaic (Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995:1183, s.v. *špy* $_1$). Its most frequent realization in biblical Hebrew is in the form *šepāyîm* "smooth, still areas" (Isa 41:18, 49:9, Jer 3:2, 21), as in the construction *šepāyîm bammidbār* "the smooth, still areas of the desert" (Jer 4:11, 12:2). Such usage reflects the semantic connection between silence and stillness (Levine 1993:89–107).

4. *"I have set up the seven altars."* God took the occasion to communicate with Balaam, who stated that he had prepared (the verb *ʿ-r-k*) seven altars along with the requisite offerings. The verb *ʿ-r-k*, and related forms such as *maʿarākāh, maʿareket* "cultic array, row" are often used to describe the presentation of sacrificial offerings (Exod 29:37, Lev 1:7–8, 12, 24:6, and see Levine 1989b:7, s.v. Lev 1:7, and 201, s.v. Chapter 1, note 20). The implication is that such activity was prerequisite, and that without it, Balaam would not have received a communication from the God of Israel.

5–6. *YHWH placed a word in Balaam's mouth.* Usage of Hebrew *dābār* "word" is technical. In Isaiah 2:4, *dābār* is parallel with *tôrāh* "instruction, teaching," and in Jeremiah 18:18, *dābār* designates what a prophet transmits, namely, a message from God. Such is the sense here. Balaam then returns to Balak, who stood waiting near his sacrifice, together with the chieftains of Moab.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 23:7–10: BALAAM'S FIRST POETIC ORATION

In his first poetic oration, Balaam is overwhelmed at the expanse of the Israelite encampment, and by Israel's might. He would share his fate with such valiant heroes, and concludes that surely such a people was not meted out for execration.

7. *In a raised voice, he recited his balanced verse, speaking.* The translation of the term *masal* as "balanced verse" has been explained in Notes to Numbers 21:27, in clarifying the role of the *mōšelîm*, the ancient bards who composed and recited this genre of poetry. Idiomatic *wayyiśśāʾ ʾet mešālô wayyōʾmar* "He recited (literally "raised, lifted") his balanced verse, speaking" recalls *wayyiśśāʾ qôlô wayyiqrāʾ* "He raised his voice, calling out" (Judg 9:7), or *wayyiśśāʾ ʾet qôlô wayyēbk* "He raised his voice in weeping" (Gen 29:11). Ugaritic orations are often introduced similarly: *yšu/tšu gh wy/tṣḥ* "He/she raised his/her voice, and cried out" (Whitaker 1972:160, s.v. *g* "voice"; *KTU*$_2$ 1.2. III, 15; 1.4. II, 21, VII, 22; 1.6. IV, 9). What has happened here is that one "raises" the recitation

rather than the voice. See Isa 14:4: *wenāśā'ta hammāšāl hazzeh* "In a loud voice, recite this balanced verse." Cf. the noun *maśśā'* (from *manśā'*, namely, "what is recited in a raised voice, aloud"), referring to a prophetic pronouncement (Isa 13:1, 15:1, and so forth).

It is worth noting that in presenting the Hebrew texts of the Balaam orations and in the translation, the proposed versification may differ from that of the Masoretes, and occasionally there will be differences in reading the consonantal text and in its vocalization. These departures will be justified as they occur. The first oration exhibits internal development, and accordingly may be divided into two parts: (1) Numbers 23:7–8 characterize the relationship of Balaam to his would-be employer, Balak, the Moabite king. Balaam informs the Moabite king of what he can, and cannot do for him; and (2) Numbers 23:9–10 convey Balaam's genuine sense of awe at the heroism and might of the Israelites, and at the expanse of the Israelite military encampment.

"From Aram did Balak import me"

In the opening verse, we are told that Balaam was summoned from Aram, "from the mountains of Qedem" (*mēhararê qedem*), a probable reference to the mountainous region of northeastern Syria, and southward of it (Albright 1944). The toponym Qedem occurs in a number of Egyptian texts, beginning in the first half of the second millennium B.C.E., such as in the Story of Sinuhe, a tale about an Egyptian official on missions abroad. We are told that Sinuhe sojourned in the land of Qedem for a year and a half (Wilson 1969, in *ANET*:19; s.v. Sinuhe, line 29). The precise geographical extent of Qedem cannot be determined, but it would qualify as a parallel word for Aram. As for the form *harārîm* instead of *hārîm* "mountains, hills," the difference, whatever it may be, is not readily understandable, except to say that *harārîm* may be a poetic form.

There is more than one biblical tradition regarding Balaam's ethnic identity, as explained in Notes to Numbers 22:5. This question will be discussed at length in the Comments, where the Balaam inscriptions from Deir ʿAlla in Transjordan will be cited as an indication that Balaam was more likely a Transjordanian, perhaps an Ammonite or Edomite. And yet, there is little warrant for reading *'Edôm* instead of *'Arām* in this verse.

The Hebrew verb *yanḥēnî*, from the root *n-ḥ-h* "to conduct, lead," is best taken as an old preterite, and translated as a simple past or possibly as a perfect. This verb is conjugated in the Hiphil stem with factitive force: "imported me, had me brought." Cf. Psalm 23:3: "He guided me (*yanḥēnî*) in the right paths." Also cf. usage in Deuteronomy 32:12, likewise an instance of divine guidance, and in Psalm 139:10. The Hiphil of the verb *n-ḥ-h* often connotes a "guided tour" (1 Sam 22:4, 1 Kings 10:26, 2 Kings 18:11).

"Come, execrate Jacob for me; and come, pronounce Israel's doom!"

Balak's instructions to Balaam are quoted rhetorically. The diviner was requested by the king of Moab to pronounce execrations against Israel. We have two emphatic-imperative forms, *ʾārāh* (instead of *ʾôr*, emphatic *ʾōrāh*), and *zō̆ʿamāh* (from emphatic-imperative *zeʿōmāh*, instead of *zeʿōm*). The former, *ʾ-r-r*, occurs in the Song of Deborah (Judges 5), where the prophetess vents her wrath against the residents of a town who failed to answer the call to battle against the Canaanites: *ʾôrû Mērôz*; *ʾōrû ʾārôr yōšebêhā* "Execrate Meroz! Strongly execrate its residents!" (Judg 5:23). The situation reflected in Judges 5 resembles that of the Egyptian execration texts, where towns and districts failing to pay tribute were cursed, thus identifying them as targets of retaliation (see Notes to Num 22:6 and Comments). It is likely that emphatic-imperative *zō̆ʿamāh* is denominative of *zaʿam* "rage, fierce anger." The most frequent synonyms of the Hebrew noun *zaʿam* are: *qeṣep* "froth, rage," *ʿebrāh* "fury," and *ʾap* "flaring rage." Normally, one says that *zaʿam* is "poured out" on its target (Ezek 21:36, 22:31, Zeph 3:8, Ps 69:25). As is true of any number of verbs signifying acts and emotions, *zaʿam* may functionally connote the effects or consequences of rage and fury, namely, "gloom, destruction," and the like. Thus, divine *zaʿam* destroys the land (Isa 13:5, 26:20), and a time of *ʿebrāh* and *zaʿam* is one of trouble and distress (Ps 78:49).

8. *"How can I curse whom El has not condemned, and how can I doom whom YHWH has not doomed?"* The sense of this verse is that El and YHWH have indicated by their persistent providence over Israel that they have designated this people for blessing and victory, not for malediction and doom. Balaam insists that without a divine pronouncement of indictment against Israel, he has no power to curse this people. This understanding of the text emerges from a careful study of the first two verbal forms occurring in verse 8, vocalized *ʾeqqōb* and *qabbōh*, respectively, that have virtually defied certain analysis since late antiquity. The form vocalized *ʾeqqōb* by the Masoretes would normally be derived from the root *n-q-b* "to pierce, curse" (Lev 24:11, 16, Job 5:3). It is significant that *n-q-b* and *z-ʿ-m* are parallel in Proverbs 24:24: "Then peoples will denounce him (*yiqqebūhû*), nations will condemn him" (*yizʿāmûhû*; cf. Job 3:8). This parallelism underscores the likelihood that the forms *n-q-b*, *q-b-b*, and *q-b-h* (if, indeed, it is attested here) represent three alternative realizations of the same root. In fact, even the Qal imperfect forms of geminate verbs exhibit alternative vocalizations. Alongside such forms as *yāsôb* and *tāsôb*, Qal imperfects of the geminate *s-b-b* "to turn, encircle," we find *yissōb* (1 Sam 5:8), and *tissōb* (Num 36:7). One could, therefore, derive the form *ʾeqqōb* from *q-b-b*, and it is unnecessary to vocalize this word *ʾāqōb*, or to derive it from the form *n-q-b*.

As for the form *qabbōh*, it would seem to be predicated on a third-weak root, *q-b-h*, expressing the Piel infinitive absolute, which can be accommodated to any tense required. Cf. the similar treatment of the Piel infinitive absolute of the third-*aleph* verb, *q-n-ʾ*: *qannōʾ qinnēʾtî* “I have shown great zeal” (1 Kings 19:10, 14). It would certainly be preferable if both forms, *ʾeqqōb* and *qabbōh*, could be derived from the same geminate realization, and from the same Qal stem, as is consistently attested throughout the Balaam narratives. In the second hemistich, the verb *z-ʿ-m* is repeated in this way. There is also the fact that, whereas *q-b-b* and *n-q-b* are attested any number of times in biblical Hebrew, this would constitute a unique attestation of the realization *q-b-h* (but see further). Nevertheless, it would be acceptable, though unusually subtle, to reinforce *ʾeqqōb* (from *q-b-b*) with the form *qabbōh* (from *q-b-h*), and to assume that utilization of the Piel in the latter case was intended to convey a special nuance. Thus, if the Qal *ʾeqqōb* means “to curse,” the Piel *qabbōh* might mean “to decree; to condemn.”

The Samaritan version of Numbers 23:8 is curiously instructive at this point: It reads: *mh ʾqb lʾ qbw ʾl; wmh ʾz ʿm lʾ z ʿmw* YHWH = *mah ʾeqqōb lôʾ qabbô ʾēl; ûmāh ʾez ʿōm lōʾ ze ʿāmô* YHWH “How can I curse whom El has not cursed him, and how can I doom whom YHWH has not doomed him?” (Tal 1994:159, s.v. Num 23:8). The affixing of the usual third masculine singular pronominal suffix to the verb *z-ʿ-m* in the second hemistich, yielding *z ʿmw* (= *zeʿāmô*) “He doomed him,” indicates that the verb written *qbw* in the Samaritan version of the first hemistich was taken as *qabbô* “He cursed *him*.” The final *heh* of the Masoretic version (= *qbh*) was understood by the Samaritan version to represent an archaic form of the masculine object suffix, which they normalized as a *waw*, and then added a similar suffix to the parallel verb *z-ʿ-m* for purposes of symmetry. The form *qabbô* would be an alternative realization of the geminate, third person perfect Qal with suffix, an alternative to * *qebābô*. Cf. *sabbûnî* “they have surrounded me” (2 Sam 22:6) as an alternative to *sebābûnî* (Hos 12:1). It is clear, therefore, that the Samaritan version knew the vocalization *qabbōh*, and understood consonantal *qbw* as being derived from a geminate root. This argues against emending Masoretic *qabbōh*, although the Samaritan reading *qabbô*, in and of itself, may be artificial. The fact remains, however, that on morphological grounds the Masoretic form *qabbōh* is best taken from a root *q-b-h* and perhaps we should accept the anomalous character of such a form in biblical Hebrew.

One could stop at this point, but there are insights to be gained by exploring the various realizations of this verbal root under discussion further. Scholarly treatment of Numbers 23:8 has not shown sufficient interest in the Akkadian cognate of all three realizations, namely, *qabû* “to speak,” which attests such connotations as “to decree, pronounce blessings and curses; to call by name,” and the like. The semantic range of this cognate can be applied to the interpretation of Numbers 23:8. We begin by noting that the geminate form *q-b-b* is almost certainly attested in the Deir ʿAlla inscription in the form *wmlqb* “and from pronouncing” (infinitive construct, with double preposition;

Combination II, line 17; Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995:977–978, s.v. *qbb*). This is the form of choice in the Balaam Pericope. As matters stand, the third *-heh* form, *q-b-h,* may be uniquely attested in biblical Hebrew in the form *qabbōh,* a Piel infinitive absolute. Several Phoenician-Punic forms may also be predicated on just such a third-weak form (Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995:977–978, s.v. *qbh* I), although, as is true of Numbers 23, there is uncertainty on this score and more than one possible analysis. Two relevant forms occur in a Phoenician inscription from Cebel Ires Dagi in southern Turkey ("Rough Cilicia"), probably dating from the late eighth to early seventh centuries B.C.E. and recently edited by Mosca and Russell (1987). That text records an official grant of land to a certain family by a provincial governor, and in the customary curse section of the document we read the following: *wqb mts qbt 'drt lbl gzly 'dm šd ʿm krm bd šp̣h kis* "And Mts cursed a mighty curse so that no one might wrongfully seize it—field or vineyard—from the possession of the family of Kls" (lines 5B–6A–B; Mosca and Russell 1987:5–6). The editors, Mosca and Russell (1987:15, notes 64–65), take the form *qb* as a Qal third masculine perfect singular from the geminate root *q-b-b,* and derive the cognate accusative noun *qbt* "curse" in the same way. They cite the third feminine form, *qbt,* in a Punic text, *CIS I,* 91, line 4 and following: *w'š yrgz t mtnt z wqbt Tnt* "And whosoever will disturb this gift, may Tanit curse (him)" (Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995:977–978, s.v. *qbb*).

It may well be, however, that the Phoenician formula *wqb qbt* "And he cursed a curse" expresses a root *q-b-h* (or *q-b-y*) rather than the geminate *q-b-b.* This is in view of the Akkadian cognate *qabû,* which generated the nominal forms *qibītu* "pronouncement," and *q̄ibu,* with the same meaning (CAD Q:35, s.v. *qabû,* meaning 4, a, 3′; 244–248, s.v. *qibītu*; 248–249, s.v. *qību*). The nominal form written *qbt* in the Phoenician inscription from Cebel Ires Dagi is morphologically equivalent to Akkadian *qibītu,* in turn suggesting that the Phoenician-Punic forms, *qb, qbt,* are not to be derived from the geminate *q-b-b,* but rather from a third-weak realization, *q-b-h* or *q-b-y.*

It is known that third-weak verbs in Akkadian (if one may call them that for purposes of comparison) may be alternatively expressed in their biblical Hebrew cognates by any of the four *alephs*: *aleph, heh, ḥeṭ,* and *ʿayin,* and that the same verb may be expressed in more than one way. This fact makes it possible that Akkadian *qabû* has two cognate forms in biblical Hebrew: *q-b-h* and *q-b-b.* There is actually a third form, *q-b-ʿ,* rare in biblical Hebrew but frequently attested in Late Hebrew. Thus, Malachi 3:8: "Can a human countermand God (*hayiqbaʿ 'ādām 'Elōhîm*), that you would countermand me" (*kî 'attem qōbeʿîm 'ōtî*)? A similar sense is conveyed in Proverbs 22:22–23:

> "Do not rob a deprived person, for he is lacking in resources; and do not oppress an unfortunate person at the gate. For YHWH shall

> take up their suit, and decree death against their detractors (*weqāba' 'et qōbe'êhem nāpeš*)."

These meanings are compatible with the known connotations of Akkadian *qabû*, and the same is true of Late Hebrew *q-b-'* and related forms bearing the sense of "to fix, specify, establish," suggestive of the realization *n-q-b* in biblical Hebrew (Levy IV:239–241, s.v. *qāba'* and related forms). However we derive Masoretic *qabbōh* in Numbers 23:8, it is fair to say that the best insights into the thrust of this verse are likely to come from Akkadian usage, because it affords ample examples of divine pronouncements conveyed by the verb *qabû*. Thus, in a Neo-Babylonian document from Nerab we read:

1) *ša dibbi annûtu ušannû, ^{d}Marduk, ^{d}Ṣarpānītu ḫalāqšu liqbû*
"Whosoever alters the words [of this tablet], may Marduk and Sarpanitu decree his ruin!"
(*apud* CAD A I:134, s.v. *adû* B, b).

A frequent query in Assyrian and Babylonian letters reads as follows:

2) *mīnu ša šarru i-qab-bu-ni*
"What is it that the king orders?"
(*apud* CAD Q:36, s.v. *qabû* 4b).

In the Gilgamesh Epic, we find the same sense of authorization expressed statively:

3) *ina milki ša ilī qa-bi-ma*
"[This matter] has been decreed by counsel of the gods."
(*apud* CAD Q:37, s.v. *qabû*, 4e)

It is interesting that Akkadian *mīnu* "What is it?" serves as the direct object of the verb *qabû* in example 2, above, just as Hebrew *māh* "what, whom" is the direct object of the verbs *'eqqōb/qabbōh* and *'ez'ōm/zā'am* in Balaam's poem. As regards the Akkadian nominal forms of the root *qabû*, such as *qibītu* "speech, divine pronouncement," we encounter formulas such as *ina qi-bi-it* DN "at the command of DN" (*apud* CAD Q:246, s.v. *qibītu* 2, e, 1'). Akkadian attests another nominal form, *qabû*, listed as *qabû* A (CAD Q:18–21). Meaning 5 is especially relevant: "order, say, permission, guarantee." One may refer to the *qabû* of a god, and we find formulas such as *ina qa-bi-e ^{d}Šamaš* "by order of Shamash."

The above meanings of the Akkadian verb *qabû*, and related nominal forms, help to pin down the sense of the Piel form *qabbōh* in the present verse.

Its meaning would correspond to that of *ṣiwwāh* "he commanded" in certain contexts. Thus, Leviticus 25:21: "Then I shall command my blessing (*weṣiwwîtî ʾet birkātî*) for you." (Cf. Ps 133:3.) Focusing on divine authority and command, as conveyed by the postulated Hebrew verb *q-b-h* "to speak," brings us nearer to the precise meaning of Balaam's response to Balak, even though its occurrence here would be unique. In poems such as these we should, however, expect to find highly unusual, even unique vocabulary (see Notes to Num 24:3 for another case in point). The precise meaning is that the execrations that Balaam knew how to pronounce so well would be ineffectual because the God of Israel had not authorized their pronouncement against Israel. In a word, Balaam had received no *qibītu* from El or YHWH, and was powerless to act. The relationship between the diviner and the gods in pagan religions, as well as between Balaam and the God of Israel in the present case, was one of subservience to divine authority. Magic did not work without divine authorization. This is the nuance conveyed by the unexpected utilization of the Piel infinitive absolute, *qabbōh* "to condemn," a step further along the way to doom than cursing.

It has been necessary to dwell at length on what may appear to be a subtlety of little ultimate significance in order to interpret the relationship between Balaam and the divine powers identified as El and YHWH. We have left Hebrew El in the Balaam orations untranslated because it is probable that these poems represent a specific phase in the history of Israelite religion. Ultimately, a synthesis of El with YHWH would come about in ancient Israel. Once it did, the name of the Syro-Canaanite deity El would lose much of its individuality, and was most often employed as a common noun, meaning "god." As such, it may serve as a way of referring to the God of Israel, and frequently occurs in personal names (Eissfeldt 1956). In the Balaam poems one senses that this synthesis has not yet occurred and that El, Shadday and Elyon, along with YHWH, coexist in a regional pantheon. Considerable attention will be paid to this subject in the Comments, and the anticipated conclusions of literary analysis have been incorporated in the present translation and exegesis of the Balaam orations.

9. "*As I behold him from mountain tops.*" We are now in the second part of the poem (verses 9–10). The transition from verses 7–8 to verses 9–10 is dramatic, because at this point Balaam is no longer speaking from the perspective of the diviner and his craft, but is expressing his own perceptions and reactions. He stands in awe of what he beholds, as he gazes down upon the Israelite encampment. Surely this people is not one meted out for divine curse, for it is a mighty force of heroes. The particle *kî* is taken as temporal: "when, as," and verse 9a as subordinate, as if to say: "As I behold him-". Cf. Psalm 8:4: *kî ʾerʾeh šāmêkā* "As I behold your heavens."

The unique parallelism of *ṣûrîm//gebāʿôt* resembles Ugaritic *ġr//gbʿ*

"mountain//hill," suggesting that here Hebrew *ṣūr*, like Ugaritic *ǵr*, may be phonetically distinct from the usual Hebrew lexeme *ṣūr/amr* "rock" (Morag 1981). This is not definite, however, because it is not certain that Ugaritic *ǵayin* may represent proto-Semitic *ḍod*. The verb *šûr* "to look" is elsewhere synonymous with *r-ʾ-h* "to see" as in Numbers 24:7, in another of the Balaam poems, and in Song of Songs 4:8. It is a favorite locution in Job (7:8, 33:26–27, 35:5 and more), where we find most of its occurrences. This fact of distribution may shed light on the dialect and origin of the Balaam poems.

"It is truly a people encamped apart, and unallied with other nations."

The second hemistich of verse 9, in particular, is one of the most elusive in all of Scripture, because the Hithpael form, *yitḥaššāb* (pausal), is unique to the present verse. This unusual verbal form, coupled with adverbial *lebadad* "alone, apart" in the first hemistich, has often been interpreted in theological and sociological terms, even politically and geographically. A frequent interpretation is that Israel is not "reckoned" or "counted" among the nations because or its peculiar relationship to its God, which differentiates it or separates it from other peoples. Comparing the Hithpael to the better attested Niphal, which is often close in meaning to the Hithpael, would seem to strengthen this line of interpretation, although not necessarily in a theological mode. Cf. 2 Samuel 4:2: "For Beeroth was also considered a part of Benjamin" (*tēḥāšēb ʿal Binyāmîn*). Also cf., with respect to charting land, Lev 25:31: *ʿal śedēh hāʾāreṣ yēḥāšēb* "shall be reckoned together with the field of the land." As a way of expressing group identity, see Deuteronomy 2:11: "Rephaim were also considered (*yēḥāšebû ʾap hēm*) as Anakites."

The Hithpael form is attested in postbiblical Hebrew sources as an infrequent alternative to the Niphal. Thus, Mishnah *ʾAhîlôt* 1:3: *ʾên hāʾōhel mithaššēb* "the tent is not included [as one of the impure objects]." As Rashi indicates in his comment on this passage of the Mishnah: "It is not included (*neḥšāb*) in the list of impurities." Tosefta, *Bekôrôt* 7:4, in speaking of the Jordan river, states:

> "The river that ushers from Paneas (Baneas) and passes through the sea of Sofni and the sea of Tiberias, even though its name is 'Jordan,' is not considered part of the Jordan (*ʾênô mitḥaššēb ʿim hayyardēn*). Which is the Jordan? From Bet-Jericho and southward."

This statement follows a series of rulings wherein the operative verb is *miṣṭārepôt* "combine, join together," indicating that this is how *miṭhaššēb* was understood, as well. Returning to Numbers 23:9, we would say that Israel is not part of the projected group of nations, or part of any empire or kingdom ruled by others. Israel dwells *lebādād*, which can connote remoteness in space, or the situation of being alone. Hebrew *lebādād* is sometimes linked to being secure, expressed in Hebrew as *beṭaḥ, lābeṭaḥ*. In other words, a nation or a town is regarded as secure because it is secluded and remote from attack (Deut 35:28, Jer 49:31, Ps 4:9). This was said of the inhabitants of Laish (later Dan) in Judges 18:7, and following (cf. Micah 7:14). Does our verse, then, portray Israel as a secluded nation?

Another approach would note that in postbiblical Hebrew, idiomatic *hitḥaššēb b-* usually means "to attach importance to, to be considerate of, to take into consideration," so that one could translate Numbers 23:9b as follows: "For, he is a people dwelling apart, attaching no importance to other nations." This rendering is unlikely. In context, what we would expect is some comment on Israel's might, which is what the poem addresses in the following verse. We would like, therefore, to propose a political and military interpretation of Numbers 23:9. One could interpret *ûbaggôyîm lō' yitḥaššāb* as a reference to Israel's self-sufficiency as a fighting force. Israel has the power to achieve victory independently, without the support of allies. Hence the translation: "-and makes no alliances with other nations."

In biblical descriptions of war, we normally read of kings being in league with each other. Thus Genesis 14:5: "Chedorlaomer and the kings allied with him (*wehammelākîm 'ašer 'ittô*) came and defeated the Rephaim." Of Ben-Haddad the Aramean king, it was said: "And Ben-Haddad drank himself into a stupor in Sukkoth, he and the kings, thirty-two kings, fighting alongside him (*'ōzēr 'ōtô*)" (1 Kings 20:16, and see 1 Chron 19:9). In reality, most wars are fought by alliances, and this has been true throughout the course of history. A. Malamat (1985) has cited a letter addressed to Zimri-Lim, the last king of Mari, in which an agent in the city of Nahur (biblical Nahor) states: "I gathered the sheikhs and conveyed this message to them: 'There is no king who is strong by himself. Ten to fifteen kings follow Hammurabi, the ruler of Babylon,' " and so forth. The proposed interpretation is reinforced by use of adverbial *lebādād*. One recalls Deuteronomy 32:12, where the poet describes YHWH's providential guidance of Israel through the wilderness: "YHWH, alone (*bādād*), did guide him; no alien god at his side."

The Israelite people was destined to conquer its land unsupported by allies. This suggests further that the verb *š-k-n* "to dwell" here has the nuance of "encamping," and that what awed Balaam was the Israelite military encampment. This is the sense of *š-k-n* in the narrative of Numbers 24:2, where Balaam sees the Israelites encamped according to their tribes, and is moved to praise. The Hebrew verb *š-k-n* has a military connotation elsewhere, as in Jeremiah 25:24, in a description of Arabian kings "who are encamped in the desert (*haššōkenîm bammidbār*)."

10. "*Who can chart the terrain of Jacob, and who can measure Israel's quarterland?*" The sense of this verse is that the Israelite encampment is vast beyond measure. It expresses A-B parallelisms: (a) verbal *m-n-h*//*s-p-r* "count//

number," which is well known; and (b) nominal *ʿāpār//rōbaʿ*, which is unique, because Hebrew *rōbaʿ* is difficult to translate with certainty. To begin with, most commentators, including Albright, follow the LXX, which takes Masoretic *ûmispār* "and the number of-" as: *umî-sāpar* (*kaì tiś ʾexarithmêsetai*) "and who has numbered?" This is surely preferable.

The parallelism *ʿāpār//rōbaʿ* is difficult to interpret with confidence. The notion that the Hebrew *rōbaʿ* = *rebaʿ* "a quarter (twenty-five percent)," has given rise to an hyperbolic translation: "And who has numbered [even] a quarter of Israel!" This rendering has been generally regarded as forced. Also difficult is the suggested translation: "and the increment of Israel," deriving *rōbaʿ* from the root *r-b-ʿ* "to crouch down," in the Hiphil "to inseminate, breed" (Lev 18:23, 20:16, 19). The search for a more suitable meaning for Hebrew *rōbaʿ* has yielded a proposed Akkadian cognate, *turbaʿu*, variously *tarbuʿu* "dust cloud." (Albright 1944; and see *AHw*:1328–29, s.v. *tarbuʿ(t)u(m)*). The Masoretic text could be read consonantally as follows: *wm-spr ʾt [t]rbʿ Yśrʾl*, assuming haplography; or, regressively: *wm-spr ʾ[t] trbʿ*(= *tirbaʿ*) *Yśrʾl* "And who can measure the dust cloud of Israel?" There is much to recommend this interpretation, which has wide acceptance (Albright 1944:213, note 28; Cohen 1978:28–37).

The parallelism of *m-n-h//s-p-r* occurs in idealistic depiction (1 Kings 3:8, 8:5), and in Genesis 13:16 we even find a connection between *m-n-h* and the noun *ʿāpār*: "I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth (*kaʿapar hāʾāreṣ*), so that only if one could count (*limnôt*) the dust of the earth, could your offspring, too, be counted" (*yimmāneh*; cf. Gen 28:14, 32:13). This produces the metaphor of dust as an immeasurable quantity, like the stars of the heavens and the sand at the seashore. Adding the nuance of a dust cloud, we would have allusion to Israel's numerous forces, kicking up a tremendous cloud of dust. Such a scene is portrayed in Jeremiah 4:13, in describing the Babylonian armies: "Lo, he ascends like clouds (*kaʿanānîm*), his chariots are like a whirlwind!" This line of interpretation produces a metaphor describing a blessed people as numerous as dust, with its army on the march stirring up a huge dust cloud that can not be measured. One would have to assume that the author of the present poem was using proverbial covenant imagery to describe Israel.

There is another line of interpretation that should be considered. In Akkadian, the term *rebītu*, from a root *rebû* means: "quartier" (French), namely, a section of a city, or of some other delimited area (*AHw* 964). The Oxford English Dictionary lists an entry "quarterland," originally designating divisions within the territory of an island. This is what *rōbaʿ* may signify in the present verse. In a parallel way, Akkadian attests for *epēru*, a cognate of Hebrew *ʿāpār*, the following meanings: "territory, soil; area, volume" (CAD E:189–190, s.v. *epēru*, 8). Interestingly, similar meanings are also attested for Hebrew *ʿāpār* in

Rabbinic Hebrew, in measuring crop yields. Thus, *bêt kôr ʿāpār* means "a section of land yielding a *kôr* of grain" (Mishnah, *Qiddûšîn* 3:3, 7:1). In such terms, *ʿapar Yiśrāʾēl* would be synonymous with *ʾadmat Yiśraʾēl* "the territory of Israel" in Ezekiel 12:22. It is this analysis that produced the given translation, "terrain." It yields an even parallelism for Hebrew *ʿāpār//rōbaʿ*. An alternative suggested by the medieval commentator Rashbam would be to derive *rōbaʿ* from the verb *r-b-ʿ* "to crouch down" (related to Hebrew *r-b-ṣ*, hence "to settle, dwell." Thus *rōbaʿ Yiśrāʾēl* could be rendered "the settlement of Israel" in parallelism with "the terrain of Israel." This interpretation, though possible, is less likely on lexicographical grounds.

We must bear in mind that verbs like *m-n-h* and *s-p-r* can connote more than one mode of measurement. Thus, *m-n-h,* when said of ingots, means "to weigh out" (2 Kings 12:11). Here, it may not be number of Israelites, or the amount of dust that Israel's forces kick up that is being counted or numbered, but rather the vast extent of the terrain occupied by the Israelite military encampment, as observed by Balaam from the heights. This interpretation has the advantage of giving expression to the visual dimension so blatant in Balaam's poems, and at the same time projects a mighty Israelite fighting force.

"May I die the death of the valiant, and let my afterlife be as his!"

In the final stich of Balaam's first poem, the crucial term is *yešārîm,* usually translated in a moral or religious vein as "upright." Such a rendering once again highlights the idealized depiction of Israel as a nation secure in its habitations, numerous as the dust of the earth, and without iniquity. This verse would be expressing what every true Israelite wished for, the death of the upright person, whose family would continue through the generations in the Promised Land (Gray-*ICC*:347, and cf. Gen 15:15, Job 4:7). If, however, one endorses the alternative line of interpretation here proposed, such a reading is perhaps overly moralistic. This poem, and the other orations of Balaam, speak of an heroic Israel, destined to be victorious; a people able to rely on its own forces without the support of allies. Indeed, Hebrew *yešārîm* is synonymous with *gibbôr* "hero, warrior" in Psalm 112:2: "His seed shall be a warrior in the land (*gibbôr bāʾāreṣ*); a blessed generation of heroes" (*dôr yešārîm yebōrāk*). It is reasonable to suppose that *Sēper Hayyāšār,* a collection of heroic epics cited in Joshua 10:13 and 2 Samuel 1:18, expresses such heroism, as does the ancient name for Israel, *Yešurûn* (Deut 33:5, 26). Hebrew *yāšār* thus exhibits a wide semantic range in biblical diction. One may compare its connotations to those attendant on Hebrew *ṣaddîq,* usually rendered "righteous, just," and that is a synonym of *yāšār* in Deuteronomy 32:4, where it characterizes God's justice. And yet, Hebrew *ṣaddîq* is also parallel with *gibbôr,* as evidenced by Isaiah 49:24: "Can spoils be taken from a warrior (*miggibbôr*), or captives retrieved from a victor (*ṣaddîq*)?" (Also cf. Isa 45:24, 59:17, 61:11.)

The semantic transaction predicated by this interpretation can be explained by factoring in the concept of merit, or just deserts. The hero who is called *yāšār* is the one who merits victory, whose cause is just; one who would have been justified in a legal dispute. The God of Israel grants victory and power only to those who merit it in his sight, for he is a righteous judge. It is on this basis that the heroic Israelites may be referred to as *yešārîm* "the valiant," who reap victory because YHWH is with them in their battles (see Notes to Num 21:14). The English adjective "valiant" is as close as we can come to this characterization because, like the noun "valor," it embodies both heroism and the notion of merit and worth.

Balaam expresses his strong feeling of identification with the stalwart Israelites, asserting that he would willingly share death with them. The parallelism of *môt//ʾaḥarît* requires clarification, because it is not strictly synonymous. Hebrew *ʾaḥarît*, like its Ugaritic cognate, *uḫryt*, refers to the situation of a person after death. In the biblical wisdom tradition, the innocent is assured a peaceful afterlife, but the wicked will be denied an afterlife; it will be cut off (Psalms 37–38). It would carry us afield to explore the religious implications of the theme of *ʾaḥarît* except to say that it reflected the belief that in Sheol the worthy dead enjoyed an afterlife.

This is brought out through poetic irony in the Ugaritic epic of Aqhat. The hero Aqhat spurns the goddess Anath's offer of immortality, a life as long as that of the gods, in exchange for his bow:

> *w. yʿn. aqht. ǵzr*
> *al. tšrgn. y btltm. dm. l ǵzr šrgk. ḫḫm.*
> *mt. uḫryt. mh. yqḥ mh. yqḥ. mt. aṯryt*
> *spsg. ysk. [l] riš. ḥrṣ. l ẓr. qdqdy*
> *[ap]mt. kl. amt. w an. mtm. amt*
> (KTU$_2$ 1. 17, VI, lines 33–38)

But Aqhat, the warrior answers:

> "Do not lie to me, nubile maiden, for to a warrior your mendacity is *loathsome.*
> "How can a mortal attain an afterlife; how can a mortal attain extended life?
> "Glaze will be poured [on] my head; gilt atop my pate.
> "And I'll die as everyone dies; I, too, shall assuredly die."
> (adapted from H. L. Ginsberg 1969; *ANET*:151,
> The Tale of Aqhat, vi, lines 33–38).

What Balaam is saying is that the Israelites are assured the afterlife of the valiant and that sharing their death would be a good way to end this life.

Inevitably, one is reminded of Samson's willingness to die along with the Philistines: *tāmōt napšî ʿim Pelištîm* "Let me lose my life together with the Philistines!" (Judg 16:30).

In summary, Balaam's first poem begins with the involved relationship between Balaam, and his employer, Balak. Balaam insists that he is bound by Israel's God, and is not free to curse a people quite obviously blessed. The poet is awed by the independent capabilities of the Israelite forces, who have no need of allies, and he is impressed by the vastness of the Israelite military encampment. The poem concludes with praise for Israelite heroism.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 23:11–17: BALAK'S ANGER AND A SECOND ATTEMPT

Balak is angry and disappointed by Balaam's blessings in favor of Israel, and suggests a change of venue. At this point in the narrative, the logic of doing so, as stated in Numbers 23:13, is that seeing the entire Israelite encampment had somehow overwhelmed Balaam. If he were to see only its nearest extremity, he might find it possible to pronounce execrations against Israel. Numbers 22:41 reports that from Bamoth-Baal, which was the venue of the first oration, Balaam saw only the nearest extremity of the Israelite encampment, in any event. Clearly, the narrator of Numbers 23:11–18 took his cue from Balaam's statement in his oration (Num 23:9) that he gazed upon the expanse of the Israelite encampment from mountain tops, and not from the routine statement of the narrator in Numbers 22:41.

11. At this point, Balak had not yet accepted the fact that Balaam was bound to say what God placed in his mouth, and he angrily protests Balaam's failure to curse Israel. Only after the second attempt fails does he realize that it is up to the God of Israel, not to Balaam (Num 23:27). The infinitive construct, *lāqōb* "to curse," is predicated on a geminate form, *q-b-b* (see Notes to Num 22:11–12 and Num 23:8). The Hebrew verb *leqaḥtîkā*, literally: "I brought you," conveys the nuance of selection for a specific purpose. The narrator took his cue from the poetic diction of Numbers 23:20, where Balaam states that he was "brought" by the God of Israel to bless Israel. One senses that the prose narrator was cognizant of the poem. In the sequence ***bēraktā bārēk***, the second component represents the infinitive absolute, adding emphasis to the finite verb (see Notes to Num 23:20).

12. *"Is it not what YHWH places in my mouth."* Balaam reiterates his subservience to the God of Israel. He can speak only what God places in his mouth.

13. *"Come, now, with me to another site."* Balak presumes that if Balaam

were to see only a part of the Israelite encampment, he would not be overwhelmed. Adverbial *ʾepes* "only, nothing but" is a locution favored by the narrator, who used it in Numbers 22:35, in the same syntax: *ʾepes* + direct object. The usual syntax is *ʾepes* + *kî* "naught except that-," which expresses contrast (Num 13:28, Deut 15:4). Here the sense conveyed is restriction. The imperative form *weqobnô* "and curse him" is predicated on a geminate root, *q-b-b,* with *nun* serving as a glide between the imperative and the pronominal suffix: *weqob-n-ô.* Alternatively, it could be analyzed as a leveling of a form *weqūbbennû.*

14. *So he took him to Lookout Plateau.* One has the impression that Pisgah is a toponym, and the same is probably true for *Śedēh Ṣōpîm,* translated "Lookout Plateau." One could, of course, translate these descriptions generically. Once again, seven altars are erected, and offerings are brought on each.

15. *"Station yourself here near your burnt offering."* Balaam tells Balak to station himself beside his *ʿōlāh.* Speaking in the first person, Balaam says: *weʾānōkî ʾiqqāreh kōh* "and as for me, I will seek an occasional encounter hereabouts." It must be realized that the Niphal of Hebrew *q-r-h,* as used above in Numbers 23:3–4, had referred to the action of the deity, whereas here it characterizes what Balaam is to experience. The perspective of usage has changed, but only for a moment, because the following verse resumes normal usage of the Niphal of *q-r-h.*

16–17. *"What has YHWH spoken?"* After connecting, Balaam is instructed to return to where Balak is stationed beside his *ʿōlāh* together with the chieftains of Moab. Balak then asks Balaam what the God of Israel has said. This is a significant question, because it shows that Balak is beginning to get the point, recognizing that Balaam must communicate the message God places in his mouth.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 23:18–24: BALAAM'S SECOND POETIC ORATION

The second poem of Balaam builds on the themes introduced in the first, adding new perspectives and new themes, as well. Not only does El control the efficacy of magical activity, but he is faithful in fulfilling his promises. YHWH, Israel's national God, is sovereign in war, and is the source of Israel's awesome power. El reveals his plans to Israel, so that Israel has no need of divination. As a result of this relationship between Israel and the divine powers, El and YHWH, Balaam is powerless to do anything except what they have determined be his mission. Whereas the first poem declares that Balaam lacked divine authorization to curse Israel, here we read that he was actually commanded to bless Israel. We also observe in the second poem a subtle transition to the theme of battle, in Numbers 23:21b, so that we can identify two parts within the poem: (1) Numbers 23:18–21—El's faithfulness to Israel, and YHWH's providential assistance in battle; and (2) Numbers 23:22–24—El's power, and his openness with his people. The poem concludes with a paean to Israel's great might.

18. *Arise Balak, take heed! Give ear to me, Zippor's own son!* The verb *qûm* here has an auxiliary function. Cf. Isaiah 32:9: *qomnāh šemaʿ nāh qôlî* "Rise to hear my voice." The parallelism of *š-m-ʿ//heʾezîn*, a denominative of *ʾōzen* "ear," is well attested in biblical poetry (Deut 32:1, Isa 1:2, 5:3). As for the construction *benô Ṣippōr* (instead of the standard construct form, *ben*), compare *benô Beʿôr* in the third and fourth poems (Num 24:4, 15). It has been suggested that the final *waw* in *benô* may reflect an anticipatory genitive. The Hebrew *benô Ṣippōr* has accordingly been translated "Beor's own son," literally "his son, (namely), of Beor." This analysis derives from the syntax of the Gezer Calendar, most recently studied by Sivan (1998). In the Gezer Calendar we find the form *yrḥw* "its two months," as in the construction *yrḥw sp* "its two months, (namely), of ingathering."

The Hebrew *haʾazînāh ʿāday*, is here translated: "Give ear to me." Prepositional *ʿad* replaces *ʾel* in biblical usages. Thus, we find *šûbāh ʿāday* "Return to me" (Joel 2:12), and also *welō šabtem ʿāday* "But you have not returned to me" (Amos 4:8), as alternatives to *šûbû ʾēlay* "Return to me" (Zech 1:3, Mal 3:7). This verse has been rendered differently by Morag (1981), and others, who translate as follows: "Give ear to my adjurations," taking Hebrew *ʿāday* as a cognate of Akkadian *adû*, Aramaic *ʿadê* "treaty," a term occurring repeatedly in the Sefire treaties of the eighth century B.C.E. Morag posits a Hebrew form **ʿād* "treaty, oath, admonition." According to Morag, some forms usually derived from the root *ʿ-w-d* "to testify" may actually conceal denominatives of this term of reference. For example, Genesis 43:3: "The man strongly *adjured* us (*hāʿēd hēʿîd bānû hāʾîš*), saying: You shall not see my face except if your brother is with you." The sense is not that of testimony, according to Morag, but rather that of a sworn admonition.

Without attempting to determine whether a Hebrew cognate of Akkadian *adû*, Aramaic *adê*, is elsewhere attested in biblical Hebrew, such an interpretation would hardly suit the context of the present poem. Balaam is not threatening Balak with dire consequences, or with punishment for failure to heed his words, or do his bidding. Rather, he is insisting that he is powerless to countermand the order of Israel's God. It is better, therefore, to retain idiomatic *ʿāday* as prepositional.

19. *El is no human that he would fail, nor a mortal man that he would renege.* The singular designation *ben ʾādām*, literally "son of man," is a favorite of Ezekiel (Ezek 2:1, 3, 6, 8), and is parallel with *ʾenôš* "human, person" in

Psalm 8:5 (cf. Isa 56:2, Job 16:21, 25:6). The parallelism of *ʾādām//ʾîš* "person//man" is frequent (2 Sam 7:14, Isa 52:14). There is also the plural *benê ʾādām* "humans" (Ps 49:3). What is distinctive here is the sharp contrast drawn between often unreliable humans and the always reliable divine El. It is the parallelism of *kizzēb//hitnāhēm*, however, that requires particular attention, because together these two verbs say a lot about the character and behavior of divine beings, and because their connotations are fluid. Here, the verb *kizzēb* means to disappoint expectation, to fail to come through on promises. Cf. Isaiah 58:11b: "You shall be like a watered garden, like a spring whose waters do not fail (*ʾašer lōʾ yekazzebû mêmāw*)." Similarly, in Jeremiah 15:18b, the prophet complains of his treatment by the God of Israel: "You have been to me like a spring that fails (*kemô ʾakzāb*), like waters that cannot be relied upon (*loʾ neʾemānû*)." In the Niphal we have this meaning in Job 41:1: "Truly, his hope was disappointed (*nikzābāh*)." The Hithpael pausal form, *hitneḥām*, can also be explained by comparison with the Niphal. Thus, Psalm 110:4: *nišbaʿ YHWH welōʾ yinnāḥēm* "YHWH has sworn, and will not renege." The more usual sense of *hitṇāḥēm*, or of the Niphal *niḥḥam*, is that of experiencing regret for some evil done, or for some mistake (Jer 8:6, 18:8, 10), but that is not appropriate here, as the following verse makes clear: El has promised and will fulfill.

20. I was summoned *to bless, and bless [I must]; I cannot revoke it!* It is preferable to read *lūqaḥtî* "I was brought, summoned" rather than Masoretic *lāqaḥtî*, and to take this form as an internal Qal-passive. The internal Qal passive is actually well attested in biblical Hebrew, but in many instances it has been masked by the Masoretic pointing, which consistently augments the middle radical (R. Williams 1970). As a matter of fact, the internal Qal passive form of the root *l-q-ḥ*, itself, is masked in this way in any number of biblical passages (Gen 3:23, 12:15, 18:4, and cf. 1 Sam 4:11, 22 for the Niphal form). There is a nuance conveyed by usage of the verb *l-q-ḥ*, as already suggested in Notes to Numbers 23:11, above. It connotes selection for a mission. Thus, in Nathan's oracle we read: "I 'brought' (*ʾanî leqaḥtîkā*) you from the sheepfold, from behind the flocks to be a leader over my people Israel." Balaam was on a complex mission. Balak "brought" him to curse Israel, but the directives of El had more authority; he had "brought" Balaam to bless Israel!

The verb *b-r-k* occurs twice in this hemistich. Its first occurrence seems clearly to represent an infinitive absolute, vocalized *bārēk*. The second occurrence allows of two reasonable interpretations: (1) The verb *b-r-k* refers to what El has done, not to what Balaam must do. El has already blessed this people. This interpretation would endorse the Masoretic pointing in the perfect, *ûbērēk*. The sense would be that Balaam cannot now reverse what El has already done, or spoken. Israel has already been blessed. This was undoubtedly how the authors of the narrative understood this verse, as we would gather from Numbers 22:12; and (2) Pointing the verb *ûbārēk* would allow us take it also as an infinitive absolute, referring to what Balaam insists he cannot do: "And bless [I must]; I cannot revoke it!" This reading produces greater symmetry in the morphology of the verb: *bārēk* . . . *ûbārēk*. It must also be remembered that in the immediate context of the first oration the blessing of Israel has not yet occurred as far as Balaam is concerned. All that is stated is that El and YHWH had not authorized Balaam to do Balak's bidding and to curse Israel, but rather had summoned him to bless Israel. In any case, Hiphil *welō’ ’ašîbennāh* "And I cannot revoke it" expresses the inability to reverse divine pronouncements. Thus, Isaiah 45:23: "By myself I have sworn, from my mouth has issued truth; a word that shall not turn back (*dābār welō’ yāšûb*)." Or, even more to the point, Isaiah 55:11: "So is the word that issues from my mouth; it does come back to me (*lō’ yāšûb ’ēlay*) unfulfilled, but performs what I propose; it achieves what I sent it to do." The exact sense of the Hiphil is conveyed repeatedly in the oracles of Amos 1–2:

> For three transgressions of Damascus,
> For four, I will not revoke it (*lō’ ’ašîbennû*)
> (Amos 1:3; also 1:6, 9, 13, 2:1, 4, 6)

The sense is that the God of Israel will not revoke his punishment of the several kingdoms. Here, too, Balaam cannot revoke his charge, which is to bless Israel.

21. *He does not countenance any harm to Jacob.* This verse serves to rationalize the divine order to bless Israel, as well as the refusal to permit Balaam to curse the people. El has found no iniquity in Israel; no crimes that would justify their punishment. On this basis, Hebrew *‘āmāl* would be rendered "evil," and we note that it is a frequent synonym of *’āwen* "iniquity" (Isa 10:1, 59:4, Ps 10:7, 90:10). Although *hibbîṭ b-* "He saw in-" is unusual stylistically, there would be no problem with this interpretation.

Most commentators have preferred an alternative interpretation, nonetheless. It is well known that terms connoting the deed often connote the deed's results, as well. Thus, Hebrew *‘āwôn* "sin" may connote the wages of sin, its punishment as well as the sin, itself (see Notes to Num 22:7). In English usage, "harm" may refer to the injurious deed itself, or to its consequences, namely, the "harm" it did. Accordingly, *‘āmāl* and *’āwen* in the present verse may be rendered "misfortune" and "distress." If we understood the third person forms *hibbîṭ* and *rā‘āh* as stative in force, the verse would mean that no misfortune is in sight for Jacob, no distress anticipated for Israel. The reason is stated immediately following: YHWH, his God, is with him to protect him from such harm. The subject of the verse would be the effect of divine providence over

Israel, a protective situation that made it highly unlikely that distress lay ahead for Israel.

There is, however, a more subtle way of understanding the present verse. The combinations *hibbîṭ 'āwen* and *rā'āh 'āmāl* are highly unusual. The thoughts expressed in this verse recall Habakkuk 1:13, where the sense is more explicit:

> You, whose eyes are too pure to look upon evil (*mēre'ôt rā'*),
> Who cannot countenance wrongdoing (*wehabbîṭ 'el 'āmāl lō' tûkāl*),
> Why, then, do you countenance treachery (*tabbîṭ bôgedîm*)?

Earlier in the same prophecy, in Habakkuk 1:3, a similar thought is expressed, employing the same parallelism of *'āwen//'āmāl*:

> Why do you make me countenance iniquity (*tar'ēnî 'āwen*)?
> [Why] do you look upon wrong (*we'āmāl tabbîṭ*)?

The meaning of Habakkuk is clear: Israel's God is all seeing, and identifies evil when it occurs. When he observes injustice he intervenes, and does not remain inactive. The prophet Habakkuk appeals to these divine attributes on behalf of his people. Perhaps this is what the poet of Balaam's oration meant, as well: El will not allow enemies to harm Israel; he will not countenance such doings without coming to Israel's aid. Among other things, providential care also avoids the need for omens and divination, a theme expressed further on, in Numbers 23:23.

Hebrew *terû'āh,* the long blast of the trumpet and ram's horn (Lev 23:24, Num 31:6), signifies the battle cry, the call to war (Amos 1:14, 1 Sam 4:5–6). The "King" is the divine king, the God of Israel (Isa 41:21, 44:6, Zeph 3:15). The battle cry of the King is "with" him, with Israel. In the epic tradition, the preposition *'im* "with" does heavy duty by expressing the presence of God and his nearness to the hero and to his people. This function of prepositional *'im* emerges clearly in the heroic tales of the Book of Judges (Judg 6:12, 16) and Samuel (1 Sam 10:7; see Notes to Num 21:14).

22. A refrain introduces the second part of this poem, and interrupts its flow. The same refrain recurs in the third poem (Num 24:8). It proclaims the power of El. The syntax is unusual: *'Ēl môṣî'ām* "El, who rescued them, liberated them," since one would expect the relative theme to be introduced by *heh,* as in 2 Samuel 22:48–49:

> The God who has avenged me (*hā'ēl hannōtēn neqāmōt lî*),
> And made peoples subject to me (*ûmōrîd 'ammîm taḥtay*),
> Rescued me from my enemies (*ûmôṣî'î mē'ôyebay*).

In 2 Samuel 22:48–49, relative *heh* is used initially, and then assumed in the subsequent verses. Here, relative subordination must be assumed even initially.

The Medieval commentator, David Kimchi, was undoubtedly correct in his understanding of Hebrew *tôʿapōt* as expressing "height," by comparison with *tôʿapōt hārîm* "the peaks of the mountains" (Ps 95:4). Functionally, *tôʿapōt reʾēm* = *qarnê reʾēm* "the antlers of the wild ox," a graphic image of power in biblical poetry (Deut 33:17, Ps 22:22, 92:11). In ancient Near Eastern art, the wild ox, *rīmu* in Akkadian, is represented on statues and reliefs that characterize or symbolize divine and royal power. In Assyrian statuary, gods are depicted astride winged bulls, and the same is true of great kings (Frankfort 1970:148–149). The simple sense of this verse would seem to be, therefore, that El, Israel's liberator, had antlers like those of a wild ox. Effectively, the construction *ketôʿapōt reʾēm*, represents *tôʿapōt kireʾēm* "antlers like a wild ox." Like the lion and the swooping eagle, the wild ox is a way of depicting deities. The theological implications of this zoomorphic depiction of the God of Israel have prompted some translators and commentators, up to this very day, to seek alternative interpretations of this refrain. The antecedent of the indirect object pronoun *lô* "to him, for him" has been taken to be Israel, yielding the rendering: "Is for him (= for Israel) like the horns of the wild ox" (thus, NJPS). The verse would then express the thought that God's power assists Israel, rather than actually describing the God of Israel zoomorphically. The graphic interpretation is more dramatic, however, and less deflected, and it should not give way to theological apprehensions.

23. The technical terms *naḥaš*, *neḥāšîm* "augury" probably refer to the interpretation of omens. Joseph in Egypt was said to use a goblet in performing such magical acts (Gen 44:15). Biblical prohibitions of magical activity classify *menaḥḥašîm* "augurs" and *qôsemîm* "diviners" together (Deut 18:10, 2 Kings 17:17). Hebrew *qesem* apparently refers to the reading of celestial omens (Lev 19:26, Deut 18:14 and cf. Jer 10:2). In Joshua 13:22 Balaam is designated *haqqôsēm*, and in the Comments it will be shown that in the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions Balaam reads celestial omens, in the manner of a *meʿônēn* "cloud watcher" (also see Notes to Num 24:1).

The function of prepositional *beth* in: *beyaʿaqōb, beyiśrāʾēl*, is crucial to a proper understanding of this verse. The simplest interpretation would be that *beth* indicates position, hence: "in Jacob, among Israel." Israel has no need of such magical means, because El reveals to Israel what he is about, as the poem proceeds to state in an oblique reference to prophecy. Albright (1944) understood prepositional *beth* to connote opposition, as if to say that magic is ineffectual "against" Israel, as a result of divine providential care over this people. The simpler interpretation is probably closer to the mark, but it is entirely possible that we have here an instance of double entendre, centering on the preposition *beth*.

In biblical Hebrew usage, adverbial *kā‘ēt* can be taken in either of two ways: (1) "at the same time, on the same occasion (Gen 18:10, Exod 9:18) or (2) "now, at this time," which is the sense here. Cf. Judges 13:23, in the words of Manoah's wife: "If YHWH had intended to cause our death, he would not have accepted from our hand a burnt offering or a grain offering . . . , and he would not have made such an announcement to us at this time (*wekā‘ēt lō’ hišmî‘ānû kāzō’t*)." Also note usage in Judges 21:22: *kā‘ēt te’ešāmû* "Now you will suffer punishment."

Use of the verb *pā‘al* "to do," provides a dictional link between the biblical Balaam poems and the inscriptions from Deir ‘Alla. Here we read that Israel is informed as to "what El does" (*mah pā‘al ’Ēl*)," whereas in the Deir ‘Alla inscriptions, Balaam says to his companions: *šbw w’ḥwkm mh šdyn [p‘lw], wlkw, r’w p‘lt ’lhn* "Be seated, and I will inform you what the Shadday-gods are about to do, and go, behold the acts of the gods!" (Deir ‘Alla, Combination I. The overall relevance of the Deir ‘Alla inscriptions to our understanding of the Balaam Pericope will be discussed in the Comments, where an edition of the inscriptions will be provided, with commentary.)

24. *Truly, he is a people who rises up like a lion.* The lion represents the unerring predator who never loses his prey:

> Does a lion roar in the forest without [having seized] his prey?
> Does a lion let out a cry from its lair except if he has captured?
> (Amos 3:4, and cf. Ezek 22:25)

Lions "lunge" (the verb *zinnēq*) at the prey (Deut 33:22), and later retire to their lairs to feed on it (Gen 49:9). Hebrew *yitnaśśā’* (pausal) describes the lion's leap, and adds impact to the more usual verb *q-w-m* "to rise up." The Hebrew *‘ad yō’kal ṭerep*, if it means "until he eats the prey," would be descriptively unrealistic because it would mean that the lion does not lie down until after it has eaten its prey. It is preferable to interpret the verb as anticipatory, hence: "until he has prey to devour," bearing in mind that it is unclear at every point whether the poet is speaking of lions or of Israel. The final hemistich has the effect of mixing the metaphor, because lions would not drink the blood of stabbed enemy warriors, which is what the Hebrew *ḥalālîm* means, but rather the blood of their prey. Thus, the God of Israel soaks his arrows and his sword in the blood of the slain enemy (Deut 32:41–42). More graphically, Ezekiel depicts the slaughter of the nations, Israel's enemies, when God will avenge himself against them, so that they will acknowledge his power (Ezek 39:17–20). The birds and the beasts of the field are invited to feast on the flesh and blood of the slain. Drinking the blood of the slain is therefore, a metaphor for the utter defeat of one's enemies. This is not to deny, of course, that in the heat of battle, soldiers have been known actually to drink blood of slain enemies. So ends the second poem of Balaam, whose message is discouraging to any would-be attacker of Israel.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 23:25–30: ANOTHER CHANGE OF VENUE AND A THIRD ATTEMPT

The narrative resumes at this point, and it is, once again, the God of Israel, variously YHWH and Elohim, who solely controls Balaam. Balak understands that the success of his undertaking depends on the will and command of Israel's God, but he still thinks that the visual factor holds the key. And so, Balak and Balaam set up the seven altars at yet another unspecified location.

25. *"Neither pronounce a malediction over him."* In this verse, the infinitive construct, *qōb* "to curse, cursing" is predicated on the geminate root *q-b-b*, and the same is true of the form *tiqqobennû* in the alternative vocalization (see above, in Notes to Num 23:8). Balak is almost ready to give up, but makes one further attempt.

26. *"that whatever YHWH commands I must do?"* Balaam reiterates his subservience to the God of Israel. Here, Piel *yedabbēr* conveys the nuance of command. Whatever the God of Israel commands, Balaam must perform.

27. *"Perhaps it will be regarded as proper in God's sight."* The idiom *yisar beʿênê* X means: "to be 'straight, upright' in one's sight," namely, to be regarded as proper or acceptable (1 Sam 18:20, 26). The form *weqabbōtô* replaces *weqobnô* "and curse him" in Numbers 23:13. More likely, it may be an anomalous form of the geminate root, *q-b-b*: *weqabbôtā* (a modal imperfect with imperative force) + *ô*, the masculine object suffix, yielding the form *weqabbōtô* "and you shall curse him."

28. In the Introduction to Numbers 22–24 the possibility was raised that Peor and Baal-Peor were names for the same site. Even if not, the two locales could not have been far from each other. Peor overlooked the wasteland, east of Moab and Ammon, an area elsewhere called *hammidbār* "the desert" (Num 21:13, Judg 11:22).

29–30. Once again, a cult installation is erected, and the requisite sacrifices are offered.

INTRODUCTION TO NUMBERS 24

Altars have been erected and sacrifices offered as Numbers 24 begins. The third and fourth of Balaam's poetic orations are presented with brief narratives connecting them. Three short and somewhat cryptic prophecies were appended to the principal orations, and attributed to Balaam. They pertain to foreign peoples, and enhance Balaam's role as an international figure.

This time, Balaam dispenses with perambulation in search of omens, and proceeds directly to pronounce blessings over Israel, fully confident that such is pleasing to the God of Israel. The third poetic oration allusively predicts Saul's defeat of the Amalekites, amidst expressions of awe at Israel's might. At its conclusion, Balak angrily dismisses Balaam, and there is the usual sort of interchange between the two. Balak had wanted to reward Balaam greatly, but Balaam lost out, in Balak's view. For his part, Balaam reiterates his subservience to the command of Israel's God. And yet, he is of some service, for he gives Balak a parting warning in advance, another prediction of doom. This is the subject of the fourth oration: In days to come, Moab will suffer defeat at Israel's hands, a probable allusion to David's campaigns in Transjordan. Edom will also be devastated.

TRANSLATION

24 [1]Now, Balaam saw that it pleased YHWH to bless Israel, so he did not, as he had done each previous time, walk about in search of omens. Rather, he set his face toward the desert.

[2]Balaam raised his eyes and saw Israel encamped by its tribes, and the spirit of God was upon him.

[3]In a raised voice he recited his balanced verse, speaking:

נְאֻם בִּלְעָם בְּנוֹ בְעֹר, וּנְאֻם הַגֶּבֶר שְׁתֻם הָעָיִן,
נְאֻם שֹׁמֵעַ אִמְרֵי־אֵל [וְיֹדֵעַ דַּעַת עֶלְיוֹן.]
אֲשֶׁר מַחֲזֵה שַׁדַּי יֶחֱזֶה נֹפֵל וּגְלוּי עֵינָיִם.
מַה־טֹּבוּ אֹהָלֶיךָ יַעֲקֹב, מִשְׁכְּנֹתֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל.
כִּנְחָלִים נִטָּיוּ. כְּגַנֹּת עֲלֵי נָהָר.
כַּאֲהָלִים נָטַע יהוֹה, כַּאֲרָזִים עֲלֵי־מָיִם.
יִזַּל־מַיִם מִדָּלְיָו, וְזַרְעוֹ בְּמַיִם רַבִּים.
וְיָרֹם מֵאֲגַג מַלְכּוֹ, וְתִנַּשֵּׂא מַלְכֻתוֹ.
אֵל מוֹצִיאוֹ מִמִּצְרַיִם כְּתוֹעֲפֹת רְאֵם לוֹ.
יֹאכַל גּוֹיִם צָרָיו, וְחִצָּיו יִמְחָץ.
כָּרַע שָׁכַב כַּאֲרִי, וּכְלָבִיא מִי יְקִימֶנּוּ:
מְבָרֲכֶיךָ בָרוּךְ, וְאֹרְרֶיךָ אָרוּר.

The speech of Balaam, Beor's own son; [4]speech of the man whose eye is opened.
The speech of one who hears El's utterances, <who is privy to Elyon's knowledge>;

Who beholds the vision of Shadday, falling [asleep], or with uncovered eyes.
[5]How lovely are your tents, oh Jacob, your dwellings, oh Israel!
[6]They stand high like palm groves, like gardens beside the river;
Like aloes planted by YHWH, like cedars near the water.
[7]Water drips from his boughs; his seed grows near plentiful water.
His king shall prevail over Agag; his kingship shall be exalted!
[8]El, who brought him out of Egypt, has horns like a wild ox.
He destroys nations who oppose him; he crushes their bones,
And smashes his *loins*.
[9]He crouches on his haunches like a lion, and like a lion—who can rouse him?
Your blessers shall be blessed, but your cursers—accursed!

[10]Balak's anger flared at Balaam, and he struck his palms together. Balak said to Balaam: "I invited you to condemn my enemies, but you have most surely pronounced blessings these three times!

[11]"Now then: Away with you to your place! I had surely intended to reward you, but behold—YHWH has deprived you of reward."

[12]Then Balaam said to Balak: "Even to your messengers whom you sent to me I spoke as follows:

[13]'If Balak should give me all the silver and gold his house contains I would not be able to countermand YHWH's order, to do anything at all by my own desire. What YHWH speaks, that [very word] I must speak!'

[14]"Now then: Behold, I am returning to my people. Let me inform you what this people will do to your people in the days to come."

[15]In a raised voice he recited his balanced verse, speaking:

נְאֻם בִּלְעָם בְּנוֹ בְעֹר, וּנְאֻם הַגֶּבֶר שְׁתֻם הָעָיִן.
נְאֻם שֹׁמֵעַ אִמְרֵי־אֵל וְיֹדֵעַ דַּעַת עֶלְיוֹן.
מַחֲזֵה שַׁדַּי יֶחֱזֶה, נֹפֵל וּגְלוּי עֵינָיִם.
אֶרְאֶנּוּ וְלֹא עַתָּה, אֲשׁוּרֶנּוּ וְלֹא קָרוֹב.
דָּרַךְ כּוֹכָב מִיַּעֲקֹב, וְקָם שֵׁבֶט מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל.
וּמָחַץ פַּאֲתֵי מוֹאָב, וְקָדְקֹד כָּל־בְּנֵי־שֵׁת.
וְהָיָה אֱדוֹם יְרֵשָׁה, וְהָיָה יְרֵשָׁה שֵׂעִיר,
וְיִשְׂרָאֵל עֹשֶׂה חָיִל.
וְיֵרְדְּ מִיַּעֲקֹב, וְהֶאֱבִיד שָׂרִיד מֵעִיר.

The speech of Balaam, Beor's own son; the speech of the man whose
eye is opened;
[16]The speech of one who hears El's utterances, who is privy to Elyon's
knowledge;
He beholds the vision of Shadday, falling [into sleep], or with
uncovered eyes.
[17]I see it, but not now; I envision it, but not soon.
A "star" marches forth from Jacob; a meteor rises from Israel.
He strikes the brow of Moab, the *pate* of all the people of Seth.
[18]Edom shall be a land depopulated; Seir—depopulated by its enemies.
But Israel shall emerge triumphant!
[19]Jacob shall subdue *them*, and deport survivors from Ar.

[20]He beheld Amalek. In a raised voice he recited his balanced verse, speaking:

The "first" among nations was Amalek, but at his last—he is gone
forever!

[21]He beheld the Kenites. In a raised voice he recited his balanced verse, speaking:

Your settlement is secure; your nest—ensconced in the rock.
[22]Yet Cain will be a trampled land, at the time Assur takes you captive.

[23]In a raised voice he recited his balanced verse, speaking:

Alas! Who will survive from *the Northland*, [24]when ships [are sent] by
the Kittim?
They subjugate Assur, and subjugate 'Eber [Hannahar], but, he, too,
shall be lost forever!

[25]Then Balaam set out to return to his place, and Balak also went on his way.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 24:1–2: BALAAM DISPENSES WITH OMENS

1. *so he did not . . . walk about in search of omens.* In Notes to Numbers 23:3 it was suggested that Balaam's perambulation was a way of searching for omens. That suggestion was based primarily on the present verse, because of

what it implies. Here we read that Balaam did not, as was his habit previously, walk about in search of *neḥāšîm* "omens," but proceeded to bless Israel directly. He was confident that YHWH desired him to bless Israel, and felt no need to await the usual communication authorizing him to do so. Standing on the summit of Peor overlooking the wilderness (Num 23:28), he set his sights on the desert.

2. *encamped by its tribes.* The force of the verb *šōkēn* "encamped" has been discussed in the Notes to Numbers 23:9, where it was proposed that this verb bears a military connotation: The Israelites were encamped in preparedness for war.

and the spirit of God was upon him.

The Hebrew *rûaḥ ’elōhîm* "the spirit of God" is the spirit of prophecy, as explained in Notes to Numbers 11:17; Levine 1993:324. The "spirit" may rest upon a person, a thought conveyed by the verb *nûaḥ* (Num 11:25–26), or it can clothe a person (Judg 6:34), or alight upon him (Judg 14:6), or, as here, simply "be" upon him, expressed as *wattehî’ ‘ālāw* (cf. Judg 3:10, 11:29). This is the first time it is said of Balaam that he prophesied with God's spirit, and this statement clearly reflects a changing perception of Balaam's role. No longer a pagan diviner, he has become a prophet.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 24:3–9: BALAAM'S THIRD POETIC ORATION

3. *"The speech of Balaam, Beor's own son."* The name formula *benô* X has been discussed in Notes to Numbers 23:18. Hebrew *ne’ūm* means "speech, oration" (Jer 23:31), and is used with reference to both human and divine utterances. David's parting words are entitled: "The speech of David (*ne’ūm Dāwîd*), son of Jesse; the speech of the man (*ne’ūm haggeber*) raised to high position" (2 Sam 23:1). That formulation actually parallels Balaam's introduction of himself: *ne’ūm* of A, the son of B; *ne’ūm haggeber* + self characterization. C. H. Gordon (1993) explains *ne’ūm* as a cognate of Akkadian *inumma*, variously *anumma* "now, furthermore," which most often introduces a speech or message in Akkadian epistolography. The initial syllable would have dropped off, leaving the form *-numma*. This is a possible but uncertain derivation, and Hebrew *ne’ūm* remains enigmatic.

4. *speech of the man whose eye is opened.* The characterization of Balaam in the third and fourth poems has been the subject of comment since late antiquity, primarily because of the elusive meaning of the construct formation *šetum ha‘ayin*, occurring here and in Numbers 24:15. The Masoretic vocalization, with *shin*, can hardly be regarded as an error, and any attempt to read

śetūm hāʿayîn "whose eye is closed," reading the letter *sin* instead of *shin*, is most likely to be rejected. Albright (1944), following earlier suggestions, divided the words differently, and read: *štmh ʿn* = *šettammāh ʿên[ô]* "whose eye is pure, clairvoyant," assuming the earliest, defective Hebrew orthography, wherein suffixed pronouns were not indicated orthographically. This process was in line with Albright's method of reading early Hebrew poetry as ancient epigraphy, allowing for the different allocation of consonants and the word divisions. Albright's interpretation has gained wide acceptance, and may be of ancient origin, since LXX translated: *ʿo ʾalêtlhinôs ʿorôn* "the pure of vision." It is arguable that the Greek translators identified the verbal root *t-m-m* in consonantal *š-tm*. The Samaritan Targum reads: *degalyaʾ ʿênēh* "whose eye is open, uncovered," and Onkelos has: *dešappîr ḥāzē* "who sees well." It is less clear, however, whether these Aramaic translations are also predicated on the root *t-m-m*, as we shall see. Relative *še* (= *ša*) is attested in early biblical poetry, as represented by the Song of Deborah (Judg 5:7), and its presence in one of the Balaam poems would not be unexpected (Levine 1985).

There is, however, another approach to this crux. Predicating a verbal root *š-t-m*, and reading *šetūm hāʿayin*, would yield an attested construct syntax. Compare Ezekiel 9:11: *lebūš habbadîm* "clothed with linens" (see Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley 1960:358–359, s.v. 116, k, 14). S. Morag (1981) discusses *šetūm hāʿayin* at considerable length, and although his conclusions as to the import of this characterization are questionable, he is probably correct in following the medieval commentator Rashi, who identified the verb *š-t-m* "to open, make an opening" in this very verse. The verb *š-t-m* is attested once in the Mishnah, and a few more times in the Tosefta, and in Talmudic Aramaic. In fact, J. Levy (1963, IV:618) refers the reader to the present crux, *šetūm hāʿayin*ʾ, in one of the entries for the root *š-t-m*. Rabbinic literature also attests such forms as the noun *šetām* "an opening," and the Late Hebrew gerundive *šetîmāh* "making an opening." All attestations of the verb *š-t-m* in Rabbinic Hebrew and in Aramaic seem to refer to one thing, namely, opening a hole in a barrel, jug or other vessel in order to extract a quantity of wine for tasting or inspection. After a hole had been pierced in the vessel, it was standard procedure to insert a reed or small faucet to extract the wine, and subsequently to plug up the hole with clay, which would dry and reseal the vessel. Thus, the Mishnah, *ʿAbôdāh Zārāh* 5:3:

> [In the case of] a non-Jew who was transporting jugs of wine for a Jew from one locale to another: If he is considered to have remained under observation—it (= the wine) is permitted. But [not] if he informed him that he is going far away (or: setting sail), so that [there would be time] for him to make the opening (*yištôm*), to seal [it], and for it to dry."

At issue in this ruling is the prohibition of *yên nesek* "wine for libations," namely, wine that may have been, or would be used by a non-Jew for that purpose. So long as the non-Jew in question remained under supervision, the wine is permitted for use by Jews, but if the non-Jew was on his own sufficiently long, it must be acknowledged hypothetically that he could have siphoned off some of the wine for use in pagan rites. Most significant are Rashi's comments on the Mishnah passage just cited, regarding the verb *yištôm*: "[That is:] He will open (*yiptaḥ*), like (Numbers 24) *šetūm hāʿayin*', which connotes the act of opening (*petîḥāh*)." In a word, Hebrew *šetūm haʿayin* parallels in meaning *gelûy ʿênāyîm*" with eyes opened, of clear sight," in the following verse, Numbers 24:4. The Aramaic renderings may be based on the reading *šetūm hāʿayin*, not on the supposed *sĕtammāh ʿênô*, whereas there is more warrant for assuming that LXX read a form of the root *t-m-m* here. Nevertheless, it is sound method to factor in a rare verb, and at that, one known only from Late Hebrew, in attempting to fathom the meaning of Early Hebrew poetry. This is because the diction of the Balaam poems is so unusual that one would expect to find in them exceptional vocabulary, including *hapax legomena*. We therefore prefer to read *šetūm hāʿayin* "whose eye is opened," while acknowledging that Albright's analysis is fully acceptable.

> *The speech of one who hears El's utterances, <who is privy to Elyon's knowledge>;*
> *Who beholds the vision of Shadday, falling [asleep] or with uncovered eyes.*

There are two principal subjects to be taken up in the interpretation of Balaam's full titulary, which has been restored here from the fourth poem. There is, first of all, the phenomenology of his visions and the nature of his esoteric knowledge. Then there is the matter of the divine names occurring in the titulary: *ʾĒl*, *ʿElyôn* and *Šadday*. Phenomenologically, we are speaking of a degree, or kind of clarity, or openness of vision unattainable by most humans. One characterized as *šetūm hāʿayin* or *gelûy ʿênāyîm* sees what others do not; he has penetrating vision, and possesses clairvoyance traversing space and time. Similarly, the idiom *gillāh ʾōzen* means "to open up the ear," to remove some blockage to heightened hearing so that one may hear what he would not normally be capable of hearing (2 Sam 7:27; 9:15). Contrast *ʾāṭam ʾoznô* "He stopped up his ear," with the result that one is prevented from hearing what he normally would (Isa 23:15; Prov 21:13).

The translation indicates that the second hemistich of Numbers 24:16, *weyōdēʿa daʿat ʿelyôn* "Who is privy to Elyon's knowledge," appearing in the fourth poem, has been restored in the present verse. This hemistich is present in LXX, and its restoration here yields a balanced versification. G. B. Gray (Gray-ICC:368–369, s.v. Num 24:15) made the point that Hebrew *daʿat* refers both to what humans know, and to divine knowledge. Israel is commanded "to know" (*yādōʿa*) YHWH (Jer 9:23), who, for his part, values such knowledge more than sacrifices (Hos 4:1, 6:6). But, God also "knows," and his knowledge is normally kept from human awareness. It is revealed only to select humans, such as true prophets. This is the meaning of *daʿat qedōšîm* "the knowledge of the holy beings, of gods" in Proverbs 30:3, namely, the omniscience, or esoteric knowledge possessed exclusively by divine beings.

The parallelism of *ʾōmer* "utterance" and *daʿat* "knowledge" occurs in Psalm 19:3: "Day to day he emits utterances (*yabbîʿa ʾōmer*); night to night he expresses knowledge (*yeḥawweh daʿat*)." Balaam hears El's utterances (*ʾimrē ʾĒl*). Hebrew *ʾamārîm*, alternatively feminine *ʾimrāh*, *ʾamārôt*, are common terms for true often divine utterances in biblical wisdom literature (Prov 2:1, 5:2, 2 Sam 22:31//Ps 18:31). We encounter similar diction in the Balaam inscriptions from Deir ʿAlla. In the titulary of the inscriptions it is said of Balaam, son of Beor: *ʾs ḥzh ʾlhn hʾ* "He is a divine seer." Although Balaam is never explicitly referred to as *ḥōzeh* "seer" in the Hebrew Bible, which is a known term for a prophet (2 Sam 24:11, 2 Kings 17:13, Amos 7:12), he does see "a vision of Shadday" (*maḥazeh Šadday*). This, too, recalls the Balaam inscriptions, wherein the titulary just cited is followed by a description of what happened one night: *wyḥz mḥzh kmśʾ ʾl* "Then he beheld a vision, according to the utterance of El." Use of the term *maḥazeh/mḥzh* links the biblical orations with those from Deir ʿAlla, (Deir ʿAlla, Combination I, lines 1–2). The Deir ʿAlla inscriptions also speak of a nocturnal dream vision. Balaam is empowered both with dream visions, experienced in some form of trance, and alternatively with waking visions. This is the most likely sense of Hebrew *nōpēl ûgelûy ʿênaym* "Falling [asleep]/or with eyes uncovered" in Balaam's titulary. The Hebrew verb *nōpēl* "to fall" is used to describe the onset of deep sleep, as we read concerning Abram in Genesis 15:12. "The sun was about to set, and a deep sleep fell (*nāpelāh*) upon Abram." In the same way, Job speaks of nocturnal dream visions: "In episodes of nocturnal visions (*ḥezyôn laylāh*), when deep sleep overcomes (*binpōl tardēmāh ʿal*) people" (cf. Job 33:15). It is also possible that reference is to a hypnotic trance, when one is asleep but with eyes open. Saul seems to have fallen into a hypnotic state on several occasions, which may have something to do with what people were wondering about him: "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (1 Sam 19:23–24, and cf. 1 Sam 10:10–13, 28:20). In general terms, the titulary extols Balaam's versatility: He is able to induce all sorts of visions.

So much for phenomenology; now to the divine names. This subject has been discussed with considerable insight by D. N. Freedman (1976), and although we cannot agree in every instance with his conclusions, it would have been impossible to arrive at the interpretations to be presented here without Freedman's prior analysis. In Notes to Numbers 23:8, it was explained that Hebrew *ʾEl* was being left untranslated on the assumption that neither the ultimate synthesis of *ʾĒl//YHWH,* nor the use of *ʾĒl* as a common noun, informed the perceptions of the author or authors of the Balaam poems. In a similar way, *Šadday* and *ʿElyôn* are left untranslated in the present verse because it is questionable whether they were perceived merely as epithets of YHWH in the Balaam poems. This subject, of immense importance for the history of Israelite monotheism, will be discussed at length in the Comments.

The Divine Name or epithet *Šadday* has not been explained with certainty. A derivation from the root *š-d-d* "to lay waste, devastate" is hardly persuasive, as it results from a transparent sound play: *kešōd miššadday* "like devastation from Shadday" (Isa 13:6, Joel 1:15). In contrast, a derivation from a Hebrew cognate of Akkadian *šadû* "mountain," proposed by any number of scholars, has much to recommend it, notwithstanding its difficulties. It has been elucidated most incisively by Weippert (1961), who proposes a plausible theoretical resolution of its complex phonetic problems. The form *Šadday,* ending with a diphthong, would have the adjectival force of a gentilic, yielding the meaning "one of the mountain; the one residing on the mountain." Retention of the diphthong would be more characteristic of Aramaic than Hebrew, and morphologically the divine name *Šadday* may be compared with the personal name *Ḥaggay* "participant in the pilgrimage, celebrant," the name of the postexilic prophet. The doubling of the second radical in both of these forms, *Šadday* and *Ḥaggay,* indicates a Piel morphology, most likely the *qaṭṭāl* form.

In terms of divine imagery, the notion of a deity being visualized as a mountain is well known. In fact, Akkadian *šadû rabbu* "great mountain" is a way of referring both to gods and kings. The God of Israel is called *ṣûr* "rock, cliff" (Deut 32:18, 37, 2 Sam 23:3, Isa 51:1), bearing the clear nuance of great height (Exod 33:21–22, Ps 27:5, 61:3). YHWH and El, like other Syro-Canaanite deities, abide atop Mount Zaphon (Isa 14:13, Ps 48:3), and YHWH is associated with Mount Sinai (Deut 33:2, Judg 5:5). This etymology is hardly demonstrable, but it should not be dismissed out of hand. Shadday in biblical sources occurs as part of the combination *ʾĒl Šadday,* primarily in the patriarchal traditions (Gen 17:1, 28:3, 35:11, 43:14, 48:3, 49:25, Exod 6:3). As Weippert explains, this combination means "El, the Shadday," namely: "El, the mountain god." Shadday also occurs independently, as here in the Balaam poems, and in descriptions provided in Genesis 49:25, Ezekiel 1:24, Psalm 68:15. In Job, Shadday occurs independently no less than thirty times.

The Hebrew *Šadday* links the biblical Balaam traditions to the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions, where an apparently plural gentilic form with diphthong, written *šdyn* (= *šaddāyîn*), and previously unattested, occurs in parallelism with *ʾlhn* "gods." From its usage in the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions it would appear that Shadday may have originally represented a type or class of gods, rather than designating the name of a particular god. Not so with respect to El, an identifiable, Syro-Canaanite deity. M. D. Cassuto (1954) pointed out long ago that the name of this deity is preserved in Scripture. The classic example is Isaiah 14:13, where the king of Babylonia boasts that he will place his throne "higher than the stars of El" (*mimmaʿal lekôkebê ʾĒl*). He will dwell in the recesses of Zaphon where the divine council meets, and become comparable to Elyon. Regardless of how El was ultimately synthesized with YHWH, and notwithstanding its use as a common noun, its original function as a proper divine name in biblical literature is certain.

The status of Hebrew *ʿElyôn* is more complicated, because it derives from a verbal root, *ʿ-l-h* "to ascend," and connotes height and supremacy. It is adjectival in its connotation, and means "the highest one, the supreme god." In form, it represents adjectival *ʿly* [= *ʿelî* "high, highest," + *ôn*, a characterizing affix, cognate with Akkadian *-ānu*, Aramaic/Late Hebrew *-ān* (see Notes to Num 22:5).] In biblical literature, Elyon occurs in various combinations, with YHWH (Ps 7:18, 21:8, 47:3), and El (Gen 14:18–20), and in a number of parallelisms. It also occurs independently, as here, in Balaam's titulary, in Deuteronomy 32:8, and in Psalms (9:3, 46:5, 91:1, 107:11).

The use of divine referents in the Balaam poems reflects their *Sitz-im-Leben* as Transjordanian, biblical literature; as part of an El repertoire upon which biblical writers drew. The Balaam inscriptions from Deir ʿAlla derive from the same cultural context, although they speak for different circles of worshippers. Anticipating the discussion of this subject in the Comments, it is proposed that instead of reflecting the synthesis of El and YHWH, or operating with divine epithets, the biblical poets who gave us the Balaam orations conceived of a compatible, West Semitic pantheon, consisting of El, Shadday and Elyon, along with the national God of Israel, YHWH.

5–6. *How lovely are your tents, oh Jacob, your dwellings, oh Israel!* In a beautiful simile, the Israelite encampment is compared to groves of deep-rooted fertile trees, growing near the water. As the poem continues, the image shifts from trees to the Israelite people and its powerful king, who conquers the Amalekites. The parallelism of *ʾōhel//miškān* "tent//dwelling" is well attested (2 Sam 7:6, Isa 54:2, Ps 78:60, Job 21:28). The adjective *ṭôb* connotes primarily aesthetic qualities; its normative connotations are to be regarded as extensions of its meaning. The exclamation *mah ṭōbû* occurs exactly only in Song of Songs 4:10: "How beautiful (*mah ṭōbû*) are your acts of love, more than wine!" One immediately recalls Psalm 133:1: *hinnēh mah ṭôb ûmah nāʿîm* "Behold, how lovely and how beautiful!" (cf. Isa 52:7).

Three kinds of beautiful trees are depicted: *ʾahālîm* "aloes" (the English word derives from the Hebrew by metathesis, according to the Oxford English Dictionary); *ʾarāzîm* "cedars" and *neḥālîm* "date palms," a unique cognate of Arabic *naḥlun* "palm tree" in Biblical Hebrew. The Niphal, pausal form *niṭṭāyû*, is best rendered "They stand high, erect," as suggested by Morag (1981), who points to the broad semantic range of the root *n-ṭ-h*. Thus, idiomatic *nāṭāh yād* means "to raise the hand" (Exod 9:22, Isa 5:25). One could also render *niṭṭāyû* "They were stretched forth"—to cover an extended area, as one would say of a string, or line (Zech 1:16); or of shadows, as the day wanes (Jer 6:4). The word for "garden, grove," *gan*, is of non-Semitic origin, probably transmitted through Aramaic, where both masculine and feminine forms are attested (Sokoloff 1990:133, s.v. *ganāh*; Levy 1963, I:344, s.v. *gān, gînāʾ*; Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995:227, s.v. *gn*$_1$; 228, s.v. *gnh*$_1$). In several biblical sources, we read that YHWH or *ʾElōhîm* "God" plants trees or gardens, like the Garden of Eden, for example (Gen 2:8, Ezek 28:13). As is true of all God's works, the trees he planted would have been the most fertile and beautiful of all!

7. *Water drips from his boughs; his seed grows near plentiful water.* The imagery moves from trees to people, and this shift is signaled in the word *zarʿô* "his seed," functionally "his roots," that soak in water. The themes of this poem are resonated in Ezekiel 31:1–14, a prophecy on the downfall of Egypt, where the defeat of Assyria, depicted as a lofty cedar, is cited as an object lesson. Similar arborial imagery is found in Ezekiel 17 and in Ezekiel 19:11, where defeated kings and nations are compared to felled trees. Although the masculine form *dalyāw* "his boughs" is unique, Ezekiel 17:6, 19:11, 31 attest a feminine plural, *dāliyyôtāw* "his boughs" (cf. Jer 1:16). Like a strong well-watered tree, Israel has boughs and, with the force of double entendre, Israel will have seed; that is, descendants in the land. Israel's king is triumphant over Agag, the Amalekite ruler. Reference to Agag, the eponym of an Amalekite dynasty, brings us to 1 Samuel 15, the account of Saul's defeat of Agag. Except for the very late fictional mention of Agag in the Esther Scroll (3:1, 10, 8:3), the Agag of Saul's time is the only one mentioned in Scripture. The form *tinnaśśēʾ* "shall be exalted" is an assimilated Hithpael, reduced from *titnaśśēʾ*. Cf. Numbers 7:89: *middabbēr* "continuously speaking" (see Notes to Num 7:89; Levine 1993:258). Hebrew *malkût* denotes "kingship" in the abstract sense, and also "kingdom," in the sense of the realm.

8. *El, who brought him out of Egypt, has horns like a wild ox.* The first stich of verse 8, extolling the power of El, serves as a refrain, one already encountered in Numbers 23:22, in the second poem. As there, so here, it interrupts the theme, and the poem promptly reverts to mighty Israel. It is Israel who devours inimical nations, and crushes their bones. Hebrew *yegārēm* is a denominative, from *gerem* "bone" (Gen 49:19, Prov 25:15, Job 40:18), a noun best known in Aramaic. It is of interest that two words for "bone" appear in the same verse—*ʿeṣem* and *gerem.*

he crushes their bones,
And smashes his loins.

We read *weḥalāṣāw yimḥaṣ* "he smashes his *loins,*" following the Syriac Peshitta, recalling the idiom *meḥaṣ motnayîm* "smash the loins" in Deuteronomy 33:11. This reading extends the theme of crushing bones, whereas the Masoretic reading, *ḥiṣṣāw* "his arrows," may have intruded here, since descriptions of warriors often include references to arrows (Deut 32:42). In Ugaritic mythology, the cognate verb *mḫṣ* describes the powerful deathblow of a warrior-god. Examples abound in the Aqhat epic (*KTU*$_2$ 1.19 I, lines 14–15, III, lines 52–53, and see Whitaker 1972:415–416). The same is associated with the God of Israel in Deuteronomy 32:39: "I deal death and bring to life; I struck the death-blow (*māḥaṣtî*) and I shall restore to health."

9. *He crouches on his haunches like a lion.* Note the sequence of verbs in the simple past, without conjunctions: *kāraʿ, šākab,* literally: "He crouches, he lies down," reflecting a pattern typical of early Hebrew poetry (Levine 1978). The lion retires with its prey to its lair and surely none would dare attempt to drive him away and take his prey. One recalls the description of the lion lunging at its prey in the second poem, in Numbers 23:24. The lion will not crouch down (*lôʾyiškab*) until it has prey to eat, but once it does—*kāraʿ, šākab,* no one can arouse him!

Your blessers shall be blessed, but your cursers—accursed!

The conventional polarity of blessing and curse expressed in this verse recalls Genesis 27:29, where the same theme is expressed in reverse order: "Your cursers shall be accursed, and your blessers—blessed!"

NOTES TO NUMBERS 24:10–14: BALAAM IS DISMISSED, BUT LEAVES BEHIND A DIRE PREDICTION

10. *Balak's anger flared at Balaam, and he struck his palms together.* Balak strikes his palms together in anger. Normally, those who are grief-stricken or experiencing remorse will strike their palm against their thigh (Jer 31:18, Ezek 21:17, Lament 2:15). This is an instance of body language, or non-verbal communication, a subject discussed recently by M. Gruber (1983). The language expressed here resonates with Numbers 23:11. In the transition from verse 10 to verse 11, we again encounter usage of *weʿattāh* "Now then!" typical of epistolary style (see Notes to Num 22:6).

11. *"Now then: Away with you to your place!"* The imperative *beraḥ lekā ʾel meqômekā* "Away with you to your place!" recalls the order of Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, addressed to the prophet Amos: *ḥōzeh, lēk beraḥ lekā ʾel ʾereṣ Yehûdāh* "Seer! Begone! Away with you to the land of Judah!" (Amos 7:12). On usage of the verb *m-n-ʿ* "to prevent," see Note to Numbers 22:16. Balak paints Balaam as a loser, who could have reaped great rewards had he been willing to pronounce execrations against Israel.

12–13. Balaam paraphrases his statement of refusal, first issued in Numbers 22:18. The merism has been switched, however. In Numbers 22:18 he says he cannot go against God's orders, literally, "to do a small or large thing." Here, it is "to do a good or a bad thing."

14. *"Now then: Behold, I am returning to my people."* Once again, the conversation is punctuated with adverbial *weʿattāh* "Now then:" (see above, in Notes to Num 24:10). The Hebrew verb *y-ʿ-ṣ* usually connotes wise counsel, not prophetic prediction (Exod 18:19), although when applied to what God has planned, it has the weight of inevitability (Isa 14:27, 19:12, Jer 49:20, 50:45). Hebrew *beʾaḥarît hayyāmîm* "in the days to come" refers to the future, but not necessarily to the distant future. It is typical of prophetic rhetoric (Isa 2:2, Micah 4:1). Usage of the verb *q-r-h* (variously realized with *aleph,* not *heh*) "to happen" elsewhere occurs in farewell orations that are predictive in character (Gen 49:1, Deut 4:30, Dan 10:14).

NOTES TO NUMBERS 24:15–19: BALAAM'S FOURTH POETIC ORATION

The fourth oration of Balaam is presented as a parting speech, and alludes to David's victories in Moab and Edom-Seir, although there is a question about the reference to Edom. It is, in any event, restricted to one verse (Num 24:18) in what is otherwise a prophecy on Moab.

15–16. The fourth poem of Balaam begins with the full titulary, part of which has also been restored at the beginning of the third poem, and there explained. The only difference between the two versions is that in the third poem the relative adjective *ʾašer* "who, that" occurs and it does not here. It may be a secondary addition in any event.

17. *I see it, but not now; I envision it, but not soon.*

A "star" marches forth from Jacob; a meteor rises from Israel.

This verse actually contains three couplets. The first states that what Balaam is about to predict will occur in the distant future, and is not imminent. Whereas Hebrew *ʿattāh* "now" is consistently temporal, the adjective *qārôb* "near" is applied to both space and time (Isa 13:6, Ezek 7:7). The third couplet begins a series of prophecies on the Israelite conquest of Moab (and Edom). It is the second couplet that has confounded commentators since antiquity, and leaves us with the sense that we are missing something. It projects two parallelisms, one verbal, *dārak//qām*, and one nominal, *kôkab//šēbeṭ*. With respect to the verbal parallelism, Morag (1981) notes that Hebrew *d-r-k*, usually rendered: "to tread upon," most often takes either a direct or an indirect object, whereas in this verse it describes the action of the subject: A *kôkab* "treads" and a *šēbeṭ* "rises." This prompts Morag to seek a different meaning for the verb *d-r-k*. This may not be called for, however, because we can cite another poetic source with similar syntax: "My body marches powerfully" (*tidrekî napšî ʿōz*; Judg 5:21). It remains, nevertheless, to explain the particular connotation of *d-r-k* in this verse, where it may or may not mean what it usually means, namely "to tread, march forth." As regards the nominal parallelism, *kôkāb*//*šēbeṭ*, some commentators have taken their cue from *kôkāb* "star," and sought a parallel meaning for *šēbeṭ*, citing Aramaic *šebîṭ*, "the name of a star," referring to a meteor or shooting star that leaves a "tail" in its wake, having the appearance of a staff or scepter (Babylonian Talmud, *Berākôt* 58^b; Levy IV, 496, s.v. *šebîṭ*), extending the usual meaning of Hebrew *šēbeṭ*. Alternatively, one could take a cue from *šēbeṭ* in its figurative connotation of "sovereign, head," namely, one who bears a scepter. Thus Genesis 49:10: "The 'scepter' (*šēbeṭ*) shall not depart from Judah, nor the magistrate (*meḥōqeq̄*) from the issue of his loins." The parallelism of *šēbeṭ*//*meḥōqēq* indicates the metonymic sense of the former.

Clearly, this verse is speaking about an Israelite ruler who is destined to conquer much of Transjordan. The question is whether the metaphor begins with reference to a star and continues with a meteor, using celestial imagery throughout, or whether the verse projects an applied metaphor from the outset, beginning with a sovereign, depicted as *kôkāb* "star," and continuing with *šēbeṭ* "ruler, sovereign." Let us explore the latter alternative first: The Hebrew verb *q-w-m* "to arise" may connote ascension to political leadership. Thus, Judges 5:7: "When you arose (*ʿad šaqqamtî*), Deborah; when you arose, a 'mother' in Israel." Compare what is said of Josiah in 2 Kings 23:25: "Like him there never was a king before, . . . and after him, there never arose (*lōʾ qām*) one like him." On this basis one would translate the Hebrew as follows: *weqām šēbeṭ miyyiśrāʾēl* "A sovereign rises to power from Israel."

This leaves the enigma of *kôkāb*, and the specific sense of the verb *d-r-k*. As regards *d-r-k*, there are two possibilities, both appropriate for the applied metaphor: (a) Morag refers to Ugaritic poetry, where we encounter the paralellism: *drkt* "sovereignty"//*mlk* (= *mulk*) "rule, dominion." More precisely, the text reads: *ksi mlk*//*kḥṯ drkt* = "the throne of kingship//the seat of dominion" (*KTU*$_2$ 16 VI, lines 23–24, and Whitaker 1972:348, s.v. *kḥṯ*). The meaning "sovereignty" is undoubtedly an extension of the meaning "to tread." On this basis, we would translate "A 'star' exercises sovereignty in Israel"; (b) The Hebrew verb *d-r-k* can be taken in its usual sense of marching, or treading. Thus, Micah 1:3: "Behold, YHWH departs from his place, treading (*wedārak*) on the high ridges of the earth." Further, see Micah 5:4: "Should Assyria enter our land, should he march (*kî yidrōk*) toward our palaces." This projection is repeated in the next verse, Micah 5:5. Accordingly, we could retain the usual sense of *d-r-k* and translate as follows: "A 'star' marches forth from Jacob."

In either case, "star" would serve as a way of referring to a hero, or victorious king. G. B. Gray (Gray-*ICC*:369–370, s.v. Num 24:17) noted that the arrogant king of Babylon, reviled in the prophecy of Isaiah 14, sought to raise his throne higher than "the stars of El (*kôkebê ʾĒl*), and was sarcastically dubbed *hêḷēl ben šaḥar* "Oh shining one, son of dawn" by the prophet (Isa 14:12–13). Humans may be characterized as stars. In his dream Joseph saw eleven stars, standing for his brothers, and the sun and moon, symbolizing his parents, all bowing down before him (Gen 37:9). Gilgamesh saw in his dream a star that fell from heaven which he was unable to lift because of its great weight. Ninsun, his mother, interpreted his dream by saying that the star stood for someone who would confront Gilgamesh, one whom he would be unable to subdue. Soon after, Enkidu, the rival-turned-lover of Gilgamesh, arrived on the scene; he was the star of Gilgamesh's dream (Speiser 1969:75–76, s.v. Gilgamesh I, v:26–vi:7). And so, *kôkāb* may, in the present verse, allude to the Israelite king, David, who was to subdue large parts of Transjordan. There is the further thought that characterizing a military leader or a hero as a "star" relates to what has been called "the military-celestial transaction." In biblical and postbiblical Hebrew literature, military terminology is often used in referring to heavenly bodies as God's "host, forces," his *ṣābāʾ* (Isa 40:26, and cf. Ps 147:3; Levine 1982). Military ranks (*mesôrôt*), and stations (*mazzālôt*) designate the courses of the stars and positions of the galaxies. It would be appropriate to refer to an exceptional earthly leader as *kôkāb*. One recalls the words of the Song of Deborah (Judg 5:20): "From the heavens they did battle; the stars from their paths (*mimmesillôtām*) did battle against Sisera."

So much for the applied metaphor. It is likely, however, that we have multilayered meanings, and that two dimensions of metaphor are expressed in this verse. Underlying the applied metaphor is celestial imagery. A "star" shoots forth, and a meteor rises in the heavens. Although the translation given here remains faithful to this celestial imagery, the applied metaphor should be acknowledged as essential for understanding the full thrust of the verse. The translation also opts for the usual meaning of *d-r-k* "to tread, march, strut," without denying the possibility that the sense conveyed by Ugaritic *drkt* "sovereignty, authority" may also be reflected in this verse. The semantic progression would be as follows: A verb meaning "to tread upon" appropriates the connotation of imposing rule. Similarly, the Hebrew verb *k-b-š* means "to pound, press down," and from that "to subdue, conquer" (Jos 18:1, Jer 34:16, Micah 7:9, Esther 7:8). The Hebrew Piel *dikkāʾ* means both "to press down," and "to oppress," in political and socioeconomic terms (Isa 3:5), just as *r-d-h* (variously the geminate *r-d-d*) means both "to press down" and "to subjugate."

He strikes the brow of Moab, the pate *of all the people of Seth.*

Once again, the verb *m-ḥ-ṣ* "to strike, smash" (see above, in Notes to Num

24:8) describes the death blow of the conquering warrior. The Israelite king will smash the brow of Moab and the "pate" of the people of Seth. The reading *weqodqōd* "and the pate of-" is preferable to Masoretic *weqarqar*, that would have to be taken as an infinitival form: "and the overturning of-," a conjectural meaning at best. The reading *weqodqōd* is derived from the paraphrase of the present verse in Jeremiah 48:45, where it has been blended with the theme of the Heshbon Ballad of Numbers 21 in speaking of Sihon's fire:

> *wattō’kal pe’at Mô’āb*
> *weqodqōd benê šā’ôn*
> And it consumed the brow of Moab,
> And the pate of the sons of tumult.

"The brow of Moab," employing Hebrew *pē’āh* "sidelock, brow," is used to describe the edge of a field (Lev 19:9, 23:22), and also occurs in topographical delineations to indicate border areas (Ezek 47:17), and this is its sense here (see Notes to Num 34:3). Accordingly, *qōdqōd* "pate" would designate the mountains and plains in the interior of Moab. The Akkadian cognate, *qaqqadu* "pate," is also employed in geographical and topographical contexts (CAD Q:108, s.v. *qaqqadu*, 3’ c). The Israelite conqueror will subdue both the borders and interior of Moab and the land of the people of Seth. It is not uncommon for parts of the human body to be used topographically, given the widespread semantic transaction whereby the human body and its limbs and parts are transposed to the natural world.

The ethnographic designation *benê Ŝēt* is unique to this verse, and it is uncertain whom it identifies, specifically. This uncertainty may at least partially account for the tendentious change to *bene šā’ôn* "sons of tumult" in the paraphrase of Jeremiah 48:45, mentioned just above. One assumes a tradition whereby the descendants of Seth, Adam's son (Gen 4:25–26, 5:3–4), inhabited parts of Transjordan. In the immediate context, Moab and the land of the people of Seth are parallel.

18. *Edom shall be a land depopulated; Seir—depopulated by its enemies.* The primary connotation of Hebrew *y-r-š* is "to possess, seize," and the Hiphil, *horis*, means to seize territory from its inhabitants, and functionally, to deport the populace. The repeated form *yerēšāh* is, however, unique to this verse. It has stative force, similar to *genēbāh* "stolen article," *ṭerēpāh* "torn flesh," and *pelēṭāh* "a group of escapees, fugitives" (Ezek 14:22). Reference is to a land or territory depopulated by an enemy invader, who deported its inhabitants. Such will be the fate of Edom-Seir at the hands of its enemies. Some have seen a problem in the absence of a preposition before *’ōyebāw* to convey the required instrumental sense: "depopulated *by* its enemies," and have suggested moving the word *’ōyebāw* to verse 19, making it the object of Israelite conquests. Thus:

wiyrōdēm Yaʿaqōb ʾōyebāw "And Jacob shall subdue them, his enemies" (see below). The last three words are a refrain, added for dramatic effect: Edom-Seir is depopulated, but Israel prevails in battle! Idiomatic *ʿōśeh ḥayil* means both "to achieve feats of prowess" (cf. Ps 118:15–16), and "to accumulate wealth, to build an estate" (Ruth 4:11).

19. *Jacob shall subdue* them, *and deport survivors from* Ar. The syntax of the clause *weyērd miyyaʿqōb* is somewhat strange. It has usually been taken to mean: "One of Jacob shall rule," expressing the root *r-d-h* (Isa 14:6), or has been revocalized to read *weyārōd miyyaʿaqōb* "One of Jacob shall subdue," expressing the rarer geminate realization of the same root, *r-d-d* (Isa 45:1). Rearranging the consonants, as Albright has done, yields a smoother reading: *wyrdm Yʿqb,* so that prepositional *mem* of Masoretic *miyyaʿaqōb* functions as an object suffix of the previous verb. One could base this suffixed form on the root *r-d-h,* and vocalize: *weyirdēm Yaʿaqōb* "Jacob will subdue them," or base it on the geminate realization *r-d-d,* and vocalize: *wiyrōdēm Yaʿaqōb,* with the same meaning. The Masoretic reading, *weyērd miyyaʿaqōb,* may have been affected by the occurrence in verse 17 of the sequence: *miyyaʿaqōb-miyyiśrāʾēl.*

The final hemistich requires careful interpretation, because of the ambiguity attendant upon the Hebrew verb *ʾ-b-d,* here occurring in the Hiphil, *heʾebîd.* At times it clearly connotes destruction, death and utter ruin, but not always. Based on a comparative study, it has been proposed that biblical Hebrew reflects the interpenetration of two roots that are differentiated in Akkadian: (1) Akkadian *abātu* A, an active-transitive verb meaning: "to destroy, annihilate, bring to ruin." In biblical Hebrew this verb is not expressed in the Qal stem, but only in the Piel and Hiphil and their derivatives; and (2) Akkadian *abātu* B, a stative verb, meaning: "to flee, be lost, be gone; to disappear," and in the D-stem, (comparable to the Hebrew Piel): "to remove, take away." Often this verb, both in its stative and causative stems, connotes exile, flight and dispersal. Thus, Deuteronomy 26:5: *ʾarammî ʾōbēd ʾābî* "My father was a fugitive Aramean." Or, Psalm 119: "I wandered like a stray sheep (*késeh ʾōbēd*). In Jeremiah 23:1, the causative force of the Piel is expressed: "Oh, shepherds, who drive away (*meʾ abbedîm*) and disperse (*ûmepiṣîm*) my flocks." The causative force of the Hiphil of stative *ʾ-b-d,* the cognate of Akkadian *abātu* B, is expressed in Deuteronomy 9:3b: "Then you shall dispossess them (*wehôraštām*) and drive them out (*wehaʾabadtām*) speedily."

Such is the sense of the present hemistich, which is probably to be read: *weheʾebîd śārîd meʿār* "Then he shall deport survivors from Ar," namely, from Ar of Moab just north of the Arnon (see Notes to Num 21:15). The sense is not that these survivors would all be killed, because that is not the way ancient warfare was conducted. The towns and the countryside of the enemy country were conquered and occupied, and the surviving population was usually either subjugated under new rulers or deported. This is the sense of Hiphil *heʾebîd* in Leviticus 23:30: *wehaʾabadtî ʾet hannepeš hahîʾ* "I will banish that person"—from among his kinfolk, a variation of the usual penalty formula: *wehikrattî ʾet hannepeš hahîʾ* "I will cut off that person"—from among his kinfolk. Originally, that penalty may have not envisaged the death of the sinner, but his banishment from the community (Levine 1989b:241–242; Levine 1995).

The Hebrew *ʿîr* "town, capital city" is suspiciously similar to *ʿĀr*, namely, Ar of Moab, which we suggest reading here (Num 21:15, 28). If this reading is accepted, it must be understood that, after including Edom in the south within the scope of Israel's conquests, the poem returns to the subject of Moab, north of it. We would, then, have a separate brief prophecy on Edom. If, however, one retains Masoretic *ʿîr*, in the sense of "capital city," the poem might be continuing to speak of Edom. It may be, as some have suggested that verse 18 was interpolated, and that the original oration did not include a reference to Edom at all. Perhaps the subsequent intrusion of verse 18 was triggered by the reference to the nebulous "peoples of Seth" in the preceding verse 17, or, alternatively, by the Kenite oracle in Numbers 24:21–22, below.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 24:20–25: BALAAM AS AN INTERNATIONAL PROPHET

Three brief oracles are appended here, without introduction. The pattern by which biblical redactors or compilers append prophecies not originally attributed to the relevant prophet will be discussed in the Comments.

20. The Amalekite Oracle. *He beheld Amalek.* The first of the appended prophecies depicts the Amalekites as a major Canaanite league that flourished in the early settlement period. In the caption we read that the prophet "beheld" (*wayyarʾ*) the Amalekites, once again emphasizing the significance of actually being able to see the people who were the subject of prophecy (see Note to Num 23:18). There is, however, the nuance of seeing the future that awaited this people. The contrast between *rēʾšît* "first, foremost" and *ʾaḥarît* "last" is expressed elsewhere (Deut 11:12, Isa 46:10). Hebrew *rēʾšît* connotes the first in time, and the first in status, and this semantic range informs the interpretation of the prophecy: Amalek, an ancient nation, the first encountered by the Israelites in battle, was once powerful and numerous, but was ultimately done in. In contrast, Hebrew *ʾaḥarît*, already encountered in the first poem of Balaam, connotes "fate, destiny," death and what comes after death (see Note to Num 23:10, and cf. Ps 37:37–38). The expression *ʿadê ʾōbēd* "gone forever," here and in verse 24, below, is distinctive, since elsewhere the prepositional form *ʿade always appears in the idiom: ʿadê-ʿad* "forever and ever." Simple *ʿad* can also mean "eternal, lasting forever" (Isa 9:5).

but at his last—he is gone forever!

Once again, the ambiguity surrounding the verb *ʾ-b-d,* discussed in Notes to Numbers 24:18, just above, has been confusing. The present verse means that a people whose fate was characterized as *ʿadê ʾōbēd* would lose its collective identity, or would be deported; the group would cease to exist, as such. It may not mean that all of the Amalekites would be killed (see Notes to Num 21:29). And yet, the traditions of Exodus 17:14 and Deuteronomy 25:19 call for the total annihilation of the Amalekites!

21–22. The Kenite Oracle. Themes similar to those stated here are applied to Edom in Jeremiah 49:16–19. There, Edom's habitation is characterized as *newēh ʾêtān* "a secure sheepfold." The Edomites dwell *beḥagwê hasselaʿ* "in the crevasses of the rock," recalling *selaʿ* in the present poem. The parallelism of the first stich is curt: Hebrew *môšāb* "seat, residence, settlement" (Ps 107:4, 7, 36) is parallel with *qēn* "nest," an appropriate way to signify a fortress carved into the high rocks of Petra. This scene also evokes the description of the eagle's nest in Isaiah 49:16. In the same way, Hebrew *ʾêtān* is suitable for describing a mountain fortress. Thus, Micah 6:2: "Hear, oh mountains, YHWH's suit, and the solid ones, the foundations of the earth (*wehāʾêtānîm môsedê ʾāreṣ*)." The image of a solid sheepfold or village (*nāweh*) in Jeremiah 49:16–19 is less genuine, of course. The Hebrew form, *śîm,* apparently represents the infinitive absolute, although it could represent an internal Qal passive form: "is placed."

Yet Cain will be a trampled land

Formerly, the Edomites had been secure in their mountain fortress, but in days to come their habitations will be trampled like a ravaged field. Hebrew *bāʿēr* is a stative, Piel denominative of *beʿîr* "cattle, herd," and literally means "a place trampled by cattle." The denominative derivation of *bāʿēr* is proved by Exodus 22:4: "If a person tramples down (*yabʿer*) a field or vineyard [with cattle], having driven his cattle (*beʿîrōh*), thereby trampling (*ûbiʿēr*) in another's field, he shall make restitution with the best of his field and the best of his vineyard." In Isaiah's metaphor of the vineyard (Isa 5:5) we read: "When its hedge is removed, it will become a trampling ground (*lebāʿēr*); when its fence is breached, it will be a trodden place" (*lemirmās* cf. Isa 6:13).

The last hemistich informs us when all of this will happen: *ʿad-māh ʾAššûr tišbekā* "When Assur takes you captive." Hebrew *ʿad-māh* is perhaps to be understood in the light of Hebrew *ʿad-še-* (Aramaic *ʿad-dî*), as in Judges 5:7: *ʿad šaqamtî Debôrāh,* "When I, Deborah, rose to power." For late biblical Hebrew usage, compare *ʿad sehammelek bimesibbô* "When the king was seated at his table" (Song of Songs 1:12). For Aramaic usage, see Daniel 7:9: *ʿad dî korsewān remîyû* "When thrones will be overturned." Also note that, in Akkadian, prepositional *adi* at times means "when, during" (CAD A I:112, s.v. *adi* A). This is preferable to Gray's reading of the hemistich as a rhetorical question: "How long will Assur take you captive?"

23–24. The Invasion of the Kittim. This prophecy predicts an invasion of Assyria and Syria by a Cypriot fleet, as well as the ultimate defeat of those very invaders. It has long been thought that the Masoretic reading: *miśśūmô ʾēl* (consonantal: *mśmw ʾl*) is the result of a tendentious correction intended to convey the message that only the God of Israel can guarantee survival. Thus NJPS: "Who can survive except God has willed it," namely, has put it in place, a sense conveyed by the Hebrew verb *śîm* (cf. Isa 44:7, Job 37:15, Prov 8:29). Hence: *miśśūmô ʾēl* "from his placing, (namely), that of *ʾēl*." Perhaps the prominence of El in the Balaam poems is what led to the Masoretic reading. The most plausible suggestion, essentially an old one, is to read: msm>w<ʾl = *miśśemōʾl* "from the Northland." In itself, Hebrew *śemōʾl* often indicates a direction (Gen 17:15, Jos 19:27, Ezek 16:46), just as *yāmîn* (and *têmān*) may mean "south." One facing East has the north at his left and the south at his right. The sense is that few from the Northland will survive when the ships sent by the Kittim invade. On *ṣim* "ships, fleet," and similar forms, see Isaiah 33:21, Ezekiel 30:9, 25, and Psalm 92:9, as explained in his commentary by Ibn-Ezra. The composition of this word is uncertain. It has been supposed that it is a plural form, because once, in Daniel 11:30, it is written consonantally as *ṣyym*. It may be a singular form *ṣym*, however, with collective force. In Daniel 10:30, *ṣiyyîm Kittîm* "the fleet of the Kittim," refers historically to Cypriots, or quite possibly to other forces based in Cyprus. The Hebrew *Kittîm* is somehow related to the Greek toponym Kition, the port city on the eastern coast of Cyprus. In an ostracon from Arad, dating to the late seventh century B.C.E. ostraca, there is reference to Kittim bearing Greek names (Aharoni 1981, no. 5; Baker 1992, in *ABD* IV:93). These invaders will subjugate Assyria, and they will subjugate the land west of the Euphrates, known as *ʿēber [hannāhār]* in Hebrew (Jos 24:2–3), designating the Persian satrapy *ʿabār naharāh* in Aramaic (Ezra 4:10–11). In Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian texts, Akkadian *eber nāri* refers to the territory beyond the Euphrates, to Upper Syria (*CAD E*:8, s.v.). Whether or not we restore *ʿēber [hannāhār]*, the reference is to that same region. According to Genesis 10:21–22, ʾ*Arām* (= Syria) is one of the "peoples of Eber" (*benê ʿēber*), the descendants of Shem. But, alas, the invading group will, itself, ultimately come to naught, a condition expressed once again by the Hebrew *ʿadê ʾōbēd*, already encountered in Numbers 24:20, above.

They subjugate Assur, *and subjugate ʿEber [Hannahar]*

The Hebrew verb *ʿinnû*, as it is used here, requires special comment, because it bears a technical connotation: "to render tributary, to subject, subjugate," in a political sense. Thus we read in the Mesha Stele: *wyʿnw ʾt Mwʾb ymn rbn* "Then he (= Omri) subjugated Moab for many years" (Mesha Stele, Gibson 1971:74, line 5). This also represents biblical usage, as in 2 Kings 17:20: "Then YHWH despised all of the seed of Israel, and he reduced them (*wayyeʿannēm*), handing them over into the power of invaders." There, the Assyrians are the invaders; here they are the invaded! This is also how the verb *ʿinnāh* is to be understood in the descriptions of Egyptian bondage (Gen 15:13, Exod 1:12, Deut 26:6). Although it is acknowledged that the Israelites endured pain and suffering in Egypt, which is what the verb *ʿinnāh* often connotes, the specific force of this verb in that context is socioeconomic and political. The Israelites were reduced to corvée labor, a form of economic bondage. In the Comments an attempt will be made to link these three enigmatic prophecies to historical situations, although it is unlikely that we can arrive at anything more than an educated guess.

25. The chapter concludes with a postscript: Balaam returns to his *māqôm* "place," the same designation used in Numbers 24:11. This implies that Balaam came from a place outside of Moab.

So ends the Balaam Pericope.

COMMENTS

In the more than sixty years since Sigmund Mowinckel wrote his seminal article "Die Ursprung der Bileamsage" (1930), a good deal has been learned about the Balaam Pericope. It is surprising how many of Mowinckel's judgments remain valid, nonetheless. It is methodologically sound to differentiate, as he did, between narrative and poetry in the overall analysis of Numbers 22–24. Since 1930, there have been innovative studies by O. Eissfeldt (1939) and W. F. Albright (1944). In the way of in-depth treatments of the Balaam Pericope, it is worth mentioning the work of H. Rouillard, *La Pericopé de Balaam* (1985), preceded by that of W. Gross, *Bileam* (1974). Separating the Tale of the Jenny (Num 22:22–35) from the ongoing narrative also makes good sense, as does paying attention, within the narrative sections themselves, to couplets that express the same themes. Where we part company with Mowinckel and most other critical scholars is in our preference for the brand of literary analysis employed by A. Rofé (1981) over traditional source criticism. Rofé has shown that any attempt to fit the Balaam narrative into a strict, source-critical structure, assigning discrete sections of the text variously to J and E, is ultimately unenlightening and counterproductive. More likely, the author of the narrative sections of the Balaam Pericope, who may well have been cognizant of both Northern Israelite and Judahite writings on the subject of the Moabites and regarding the legendary Balaam, composed the narrative prose in an original way. That author did not simply compile existing sources or "hinge" and "braid" them according to the usual techniques. As a consequence, we must employ a less rigid method of literary analysis if we are to define the relation of the Balaam narratives to the Balaam poems. What is eminently clear is that the poems speak for themselves, and that the narratives are predicated upon a different casting of Balaam. According to the interpretation to be adopted here, the Balaam narratives take their cue from the poems, but they reinterpret the issues reflected in them. The narratives represent a later composition, emanating from a very different circle of biblical authors.

The Comments to Numbers 22–24 are intended, in the first instance, to explain how the biblical Balaam Pericope achieved its received form. Beyond this, we will be called upon to identify the various circles within biblical Israel for whom Numbers 22–24 speak, in part and in whole; to identify their *Sitz-im-Leben*. Exegetical and historical questions are, moreover, integrally related to each other. Mowinckel's discussion of the two different traditions concerning Balaam's origins, the Transjordanian and the Aramaean-Syrian and their interplay in the biblical sources is a case in point. His exegesis of Numbers 22:5, where the question of Balaam's origins comes to a head, is truly penetrating.

The intervening discovery of the Balaam texts from Deir ʿAlla in the Jordan Valley, and their publication by J. Hoftijzer and G. van der Kooij in 1976, have opened up new possibilities for identifying the cultural and historical origin of the Balaam Pericope beyond what Mowinckel or anyone else could have foreseen, or inferred from the Hebrew Bible alone. The Deir ʿAlla texts, apart from the startling fact that they mention Balaam, son of Beor, by name several times, bear striking affinities to the biblical writings, especially but not exclusively the Balaam poems; affinities of theme, form and diction. However we classify the Deir ʿAlla language in precise linguistic terms, it is certainly close to biblical Hebrew in many respects. Quite clearly, the Balaam texts from Deir ʿAlla were composed in the area where they were found; they represent an indigenous literary creation. It is therefore time, after all that has been written about the Balaam texts from Deir ʿAlla, to attempt a fresh assessment of their relevance to the interpretation of the biblical sources. The principal possibility raised by the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions is that the biblical Balaam poems were also written in Gilead, where Tell Deir ʿAlla is located, and where an Israelite community lived for several centuries. A Transjordanian origin may also be suggested for other biblical sources of similar character. Viewed in their Transjordanian context, the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions may have been written by a Transjordanian Israelite, thereby representing the literary creativity of that community.

We can trace the history of the Israelite community in Gilead at least as far back as the tenth century B.C.E., to the period of the United Monarchy, and down to the third quarter of the eighth century B.C.E., on the eve of the Assyrian expeditions to Canaan and Transjordan. Against this background, I have proposed the existence of a biblical archive or repertoire, called T for "Transjordanian," that contained the contributions of the Israelite community in Gilead, most notably for the present Commentary, the biblical Balaam poems. This archive was probably preserved along with the writings of the Elohist and the works of northern Israelite prophets during the period when Northern Israel dominated areas of Transjordan, before the Assyrians put an end to the Transjordanian Israelite community in the late eighth century B.C.E. Other biblical writings that may have originated in Transjordan would include the Sheol oracle of Isaiah 14, which bears dictional affinities to Combination II of the Balaam texts from Deir ʿAlla, and like the biblical poem, also speaks of El. Beyond the form and content of the biblical and extra-biblical Balaam texts, there is the striking figure of Balaam himself. The Deir ʿAlla inscriptions reveal a Balaam similar in some respects to his biblical counterpart, yet different from him, as well. These extra-biblical sources, dated ca. 800 B.C.E. or later on in the first half of the eighth century B.C.E. on archaeological grounds, and historically compatible with that time frame, shed new light on what represents a fascinating complex of biblical traditions.

The Comments will be organized in the following manner: They will begin with a discussion of the Balaam poems, and then proceed to the Balaam narratives and the three appended prophecies. Following upon this, an edition of and commentary to the Balaam texts from Deir ʿAlla will be provided. Apart from its intrinsic value, this edition, and a discussion of the *Sitz-im-Leben* of these inscriptions, will point the way for the integration of the Balaam texts from Deir ʿAlla within the Numbers commentary.

COMMENT 1: THE BIBLICAL BALAAM POEMS: LITERARY ANALYSIS AND WHERE IT LEADS

Within the Balaam Pericope, Numbers 23–24 are comprised of a series of narratives in which poems appear at intervals. This pattern is also true of Numbers 21, where three poetic selections are cited. According to the analysis given in the Commentary, the function of the poetic citations in Numbers 21 is to lend greater authority to the narrative; they are proof-texts. In one instance there is explicit reference to a named source, and in a second to a genre of poems from which the selection was taken. Thus, in Numbers 21:14, we find a citation from *sēper milḥamōt YHWH* "The Chronicle of the Wars of YHWH," and in Numbers 21:27–30 the Heshbon Ballad is attributed to the mōšelîm, the compilers of *mešālîm* "balanced verses." In a third instance, we are told that the Israelites sang a song at a well, entitled *ʿalî beʾēr* "Surge, oh well!" As presented, the poem could have been written for the occasion just as the Song of the Sea in Exodus 15, similarly introduced, could have been written as part of the account of the crossing of the Sea of Reeds. Critical analysis would undoubtedly dispute this conclusion in both instances. In effect, the narratives of Numbers 21:4–22:1 openly drew on existing poetry, albeit interpreting the poetic selections in novel ways, and lending to them literary functions not original to them.

Determining the literary relationship of the Balaam poems to the narratives of Numbers 22–24 is more difficult. The poems are hardly what Balak would have ordered, but they are presented as part of a consecutive narrative sequence, carried forward by Balak's actions. At Balak's behest, Balaam declaimed the poems on the spot, when the proper moment in the chain of events arrived. In literary-historical terms, as opposed to textual presentation, it is highly improbable that the Balaam poems were written to fit into the narratives. It is more likely that the poetic orations existed independently of the narratives, perhaps even as a collection. But how can this proposed literary relationship between the poems and the narrative be demonstrated? The key lies in clarifying the particular perspectives conveyed, respectively, in the poems and in the narratives, and the themes and diction that inform each. Methodologically, we had best begin with an analysis of the themes and diction that inform the poems, on the hypothesis that the poems derive from a source, or sources separate from the narrative sections of Numbers 22–24. Once the poems have been studied for themselves, the narratives can be compared and contrasted with them. It will emerge that the poems are older than the narratives and from a different environment. The narratives take up themes first introduced in the poems, and modulate them in significant ways. The result is that the narratives project perspectives quite different from those of the poems.

The Dynamic of the Balaam Poems

The first two of the four Balaam poems mention Balak, the Moabite king, by name, and in both cases, this reference comes in the opening verse. In the first poem, Balaam recounts that Balak, king of Moab, had him brought from Aram, from the mountains of Qedem. In the second poem, Balaam, in a dramatic address, calls upon Balak to heed his words. The clearest indication that the Balaam poems represent a discrete collection of *mĕšālîm* comes from internal connections that link the four poems to each other. These connections have been duly noted by scholars, and some have already been mentioned in Notes and earlier Comments. In the first poem, the parallelism *rāʾāh//šûr* "to see, behold, gaze" (Num 23:9) describes what Balaam saw at the moment, by visual contact, whereas in the fourth poem (Num 24:17) the same parallelism is part of a visionary prediction of events to occur in the distant future. The result is an inclusio, progressing from the present to the future, from space to time. In the second poem (Num 23:21), it is God who sees, or rather refuses to "see," or to "countenance" (*hibbîṭ//rā'āh*) any harm done to Jacob-Israel.

There are two links between the second and third poems that deserve notice. They are particularly significant because a thematic break comes precisely between the second and third poems, and this has led some scholars to conclude that we have only two essential poems, orations one and two, and orations three and four. Note, however, that in the second poem (Num 23:24) Israel is said to be like a lion rising up to leap, who will not crouch down (the verb *š-k-b*) until he has caught his prey. In the third poem (Num 24:9) the lion of simile has already crouched down, and is devouring his prey, so that no one can possibly drive him off. Furthermore, the refrain that describes El as a wild ox with high antlers recurs in the second and third poems (Num 23:22, Num 24:7a). By these devices, the transition from defining Balaam's mission and status vis-à-vis contemporary Israel, which is the agenda of the first two poems, to the predictions of future Israelite victories on both sides of the Jordan, the subject of the third and fourth poems, is bridged. Another kind of link among the four Balaam poems is provided by the names given to the subject people, Jacob and Israel. We find parallel pairing, wherein Jacob is the A term, and Israel the B term. This parallelism occurs twice each in poems I and II, and once each in poems III and IV. (In poem IV [Num 24:18–19], the parallel order is once reversed in sequential references, first to Israel and then to Jacob.)

Except for referring to Jacob-Israel as an *'ām* "people," once in the first poem (Num 23:9) and once in the second (Num 23:24), there are in the four Balaam poems no other specific terms for the collective. It is never called *hā'ām* "the people," or *benê Yiśrā'ēl* "The Israelites," only *Ya'aqōb//Yiśrā'ēl*. In poem III (Num 24:7), we read of a king and of kingship (*melek* and *malkût*, respectively) whose antecedent is Jacob/Israel. The allusion is to Saul's victory over Amalek, a northern Israelite theme. It would seem that the parallelism of Jacob//Israel is a feature of biblical poetry meant to be comprehensive of all Israel, including Judah and the Israelite community of Transjordan, as well as northern Israel. That Jacob should precede Israel in the pairing of the two names is only to be expected in the light of the etiological tale preserved in Genesis 32:29, and referred to in Genesis 35:10, of the change of the earlier name Jacob to the name Israel. In terms of content, the first of these accounts refers to an incident that took place in the Valley of Sukkoth in Transjordan, near the Jabbok river, at Penuel, when Jacob fought with an angel who appeared as a man. This brings us to the immediate area of Deir 'Alla, where the Balaam inscriptions were discovered. The second account reports on a theophany at Bethel in northern Israel. The combination Jacob/Israel may have originated in northern Israel, although it was used by Judean, Israelite and Transjordanian poets as well. A blatantly northern Israelite reference to Jacob/

Israel comes in Genesis 49:24, in the blessing addressed to Joseph, where we have *ʾabîr Yaʿaqōb* "the steed of Jacob," parallel with *rōʿeh Yiśrāʾēl* "the shepherd of Israel."

In addition to these internal connections, the four Balaam poems show a sequential dynamic. Poem I states that neither El nor YHWH has authorized execrations against Israel, so that Balaam, who had been brought by Balak from Aram, cannot pronounce them effectively. Balaam is greatly impressed by Israel's might and the vast extent of its encampment, and by its heroism. He would share the fate of Israel's heroes. Poem II, again mentioning Balak by name, makes the point that Balaam has been commissioned by El to pronounce blessings over Israel, a people protected by YHWH, its national God. El will not renege on his promise to Israel, and Balaam, for his part, is not free to withdraw from this assignment. He has no choice but to pronounce blessings over Israel. What is more, Israel has no need of divination, nor can such magic harm him, because Israel is informed as to what El has in mind. Poems III and IV specify what is in store for Israel, and for the peoples inhabiting both sides of the Jordan. "His king," an apparent reference to Saul, will defeat the Amalekites west of the Jordan, and a "star," undoubtedly an allusion to David, will subdue the Moabites and Edomites east of the Jordan. The *Sitz-im-Leben* of these two Balaam poems will be discussed in due course. Their stated or narrative context is the conquest of Canaan and the subjection of parts of Transjordan by Israelite kings, events revealed before Israel's entry into the Promised Land.

The Phenomenology of Execrations and Visions in the Balaam Poems

Balaam's charge was to curse Jacob/Israel, to pronounce its doom. One may assume that such was Balaam's skill; that he was known for pronouncing efficacious execrations and was brought to Moab for that purpose. The first question to be explored is how such cursing would have taken place, and what it would have consisted of, assuming that Balaam had, indeed, undertaken to accomplish Balak's charge. What was it, in phenomenological terms, that Balak expected Balaam to do?

A diviner or seer undertaking to curse an enemy would call upon a god or a group of gods to attack the enemy and defeat it or disperse it. Biblical literature preserves such requests of, or appeals to divine powers, which, when pronounced, have the effective power of incantations or spells cast over the enemy. The Song of the Ark in Numbers 10:35–36 is a prime example:

qûmāh YHWH! *weyāpūṣû ʾôyebêkā;*
weyānūsû meśanʾêkā mippānêkā

Attack, YHWH! Your enemies disperse;
Your foes flee from your presence!

It has been explained (Levine 1993:312, 318) that whenever the Ark was carried into battle this text was to be pronounced. It was to have the effect of enlisting YHWH's participation in battle, and thereby of assuring victory. The immediate context is the march to the Promised Land, but the captions imply that the Ark would be used in the wars of conquest (A. Shaffer 1995, personal communication). The same call upon YHWH is echoed in Psalm 68:2.

yāqûm ʾelōhîm, yāpûṣû ʾôyebāw;
weyānûsû meśanʾaw̄ mippānāw.

God attacks! his enemies disperse!
His foes flee from his presence!

The adventures of the Ark that are preserved in 1 Samuel illustrate its battle role, and relate an incident when the Ark failed to repulse the enemy. After suffering a defeat at the hands of the Philistines, the Israelites brought the Ark from Shiloh and carried it into battle with them in the hope that it would turn the fortunes of war in their favor. Fearing the arrival of Israel's God into the field of battle, the Philistines took courage and routed the Israelites and captured the Ark (1 Sam 4). It was only twenty years later that the cult prophet Samuel was able to explain to the oppressed Israelites the reason for the Ark's failure to assure them victory. He introduced the factor of disloyal idolatry, thereby modulating the belief in the numinous effect of the Ark on the enemy (1 Sam 7). What the numinous Ark was expected to do in battle, namely, to disperse the enemy as the call upon YHWH was pronounced, was what Balak wanted Balaam to accomplish by pronouncing curses against Israel. In the curse section of a treaty between the Assyrian king, Samši-Adad V (823–811 B.C.E.) and the Babylonian king Marduk-zakir-sumi, the punishment of the god Marduk is called down on any successor king who may violate the treaty:

> May Marduk, the great lord, whose commands take precedence [*by his unalterable word*] order his decay and the dispersion of his people [. . .]; may he pour out his life like water; [may he destroy] his country, strike down his people [through hunger] and famine, and lead him [to *captivity* . . .] (Parpola and Watanabe 1988:4–5, lines 16–19).

In general, the curse sections of ancient Near Eastern treaties are a prime source for the interpretation of biblical execrations, as are the Egyptian execration texts. These often project defeat in war and the desolation of the land in addition to exile. The verb *z-ʿ-m* "to pronounce doom, to doom," used in Balak's charge to Balaam in the first poem, is instructive for our understanding of what was in store for a people or a land that was so cursed. The prophet Zechariah (1:12) refers to the condition of Jerusalem and the towns of Judah from 586 until 516 B.C.E., when the returning exiles laid the foundation of their new temple, in areas "which you (God) have doomed (*'ašer zāʿamtāh*) for these seventy years." Malachi (1:4) proclaims that Esau-Edom, whom YHWH hates, will be called "the people whom YHWH has doomed (*'ašer zāʿam YHWH*) forever." The mountains will be turned into wasteland, and the territory of Esau-Edom into wilderness desolation. The spirit of such execrations permeates the admonitions threatened against Israel in the epilogues to the Holiness Code (Leviticus 26) and to the Deuteronomic Laws (Deuteronomy 28–30). The key verb, as in the Song of the Ark cited above, is *n-w-s* "to flee." Thus, Leviticus 26:17:

> I will set my face against you; you shall be routed by your enemies, and your foes shall dominate you. You shall flee (*wenastem*) though none pursues.

The statements in Deuteronomy 28–30 on flight and dispersal are more dramatic. Thus, Deuteronomy 28:25:

> May YHWH cause you to be repulsed by your enemies. You will advance against him by one route and flee before him by seven routes.

These are the types of curses that Balak had wanted, but Balaam responded by saying that he cannot curse Jacob/Israel, because execrations against Israel have not been authorized by El or YHWH. This lack of authority would render any inimical magical acts aimed at Jacob/Israel ineffective because, as Balaam insists, this people had been chosen providentially for blessing, not for cursing. To put it another way: The kinds of punishments that are threatened in the curses mentioned above have not been authorized; to the contrary, blessings have been authorized.

> You will give chase to your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. Five of you shall give chase to a hundred, and a hundred of you shall give chase to ten thousand. (Lev 26:7–8).
>
> May YHWH cause your enemies who attack you to be repulsed before you. By one route they will advance against you, and by seven routes will they flee before you (Deut 28:7–8).

Balaam experiences both visual and audial communications from divinities, and acquire esoteric knowledge in both of these ways. The visual dimension involves both time and space. He sees the object of his pronouncements, his intended target. It is implicit that having the target of the curse in sight is requisite to the efficacy of the pronouncement. This theme is carried to great lengths in the narratives, as Balaam shifts his vantage point several times for this purpose. Balaam gazes down at the Israelite settlement from atop mountains, but what he sees overwhelms him. There is the distinct impression, as will be noted further on, that Balaam concluded from his own observation that curses won't work against Israel. Both seeing into the future and beholding things remote in space are also part of Balaam's experience, as is hearing the words of El. All of this he can experience either in dreams while asleep, or with open eyes. Such competence is highlighted in Balaam's titulary, which introduces both the third and the fourth poems. The key locutions are *hazah . . . mahazeh* "to experience a vision," *šōmēʿa ʾōmer* "hearer of the word"—of a divine being, and the cognate formulation *yōdēʿa daʿat* "knower of the knowledge"—of a divine being.

Balaam the Diviner's Subservience to Divine Power

Leaving aside for the moment the question of what the parallelism El// YHWH in Numbers 23:8 connotes theologically, the first presupposition of the poem is that magical activity, here the pronouncement of execrations, is under divine control. The doctrine of the divine control of magical praxis is to be assumed in the ancient Near East, as a general rule. The magical practitioner did not attempt to coerce the gods; rather, he regularly appealed to the gods for instruction, authorization and assistance (see Notes to the first Balaam poem, Num 23:7–10). We must acknowledge the subservience of the magical practitioner to divine power in order to realize why Balaam was powerless to act. This relationship has been misunderstood. G. Coats (1982) speaks of Balaam as obedient, maintaining that such was his outstanding virtue, the quality that made of him a legendary character. Coats thinks that Balaam had a choice in the matter, and that he decided to obey the God of Israel rather than to be tempted by Balak's offer of riches. Coats drew little if any distinction between the presuppositions of the poems and those of the narratives, but it would not have made much difference if he had. The prose narratives also express the attitude of subservience loudly and clearly. It should be evident that a decision to obey is not what either the first or the second poem is talking about. What Balaam says is that neither El nor YHWH had authorized curses against Israel. To the contrary, he, Balaam, had been selected or commissioned to bless Israel. He could not countermand the divine will nor was he free to withdraw from his mission; there was no choice in the matter.

It is surely acceptable to attribute intent and purpose to literary characters, to attempt to fathom their actual motivations as over and against the reasons for their behavior as stated in the texts. One could say that underlying Balaam's protestations of subservience was his personal acceptance of the fact that he had no choice. In the same spirit we could say that when Jeremiah referred to his prenatal selection for the prophetic mission, and when he referred to God's word as a fire trapped in his bones, he, too, meant to say that he could not resist his mission. We should be mindful of how biblical writers characterized the relationship of prophets and "men of God" to divine power in cases when there was resistance. In the Hebrew Bible, we read of Jonah who unsuccessfully attempted flight, of Moses who initially refused his mission, and of two unnamed prophets whose strange experiences are related in 1 Kings 13. They all learned, one at the cost of his life, that God's edicts cannot be countermanded. It is true that Balaam did not resist the divine will but rather surrendered to it, but to call this surrender an act of obedience is misleading.

What we are not told in the first poem is how Balaam knew specifically that El and YHWH had chosen Israel for blessing. Based on what the first poem says, it is almost as if Balaam arrived at this conclusion through experience and reason. He gazed down at the Israelite encampment from mountain tops, and was overwhelmed by Israel's might. Israel was encamped on its own, without allies from other nations in attendance. The Israelite encampment was vast, and the Israelite forces were made up of heroes at whose side he would be prepared to meet death. Surely, this was not a people meted out for curses and doom; but rather one that had been blessed. This thought was brought out succinctly, albeit a bit naively, in an essay written in 1913 by the British cleric and scholar, George Adam Smith:

> On what does Balaam base the conviction for which he has waited so impartially, and which when it arrives is strong enough to overwhelm his former practices and ideas? He rests it on the fact that God has already blessed Israel. There is no use in him, Balaam, fighting against a Divine Fact. This is the whole matter—very simple and very clear (G. A. Smith 1913).

It is to be assumed, nevertheless, that Balaam received divine instruction concerning Israel. The third and fourth poems are explicit on this point. Balaam is privy to divine knowledge, and experiences various kinds of revelations from El, Elyon and Shadday. What he goes on to say about Israel in predicting Israelite victories has been revealed to him. In the second poem the relationship of Balaam to divine power is less explicit, but suggestive, all the same. We read that Balaam perceived himself to have been selected for the mission of blessing Israel. Balaam realized two things: There is no way that El would renege on the promise to bless Israel. Furthermore, he, Balaam, must carry out his mission, and cannot withdraw from it. The divine mandate overrides Balak's assignment.

To Which Divine Power or Powers was Balaam Subservient?

Regardless of how one assesses the relative valence of human and divine factors as they affected Balaam, there is inevitably a further question to be answered: We must explain why a non-Israelite pagan seer did not act in the name of the gods of Moab, or in the name of his own gods. To put it another way: Why is Balaam presented as one bound to the will of divine powers who protect and favor only Israel? Why doesn't he line up with opposing powers? In another situation of conflict a Moabite king, contextually identified as Mesha, turned the tide of battle against Israel by offering up his firstborn son and successor as a burnt offering. This act forced an Israelite retreat, and we read that a great wrath was cast over Israel (2 Kings 3:26–27). It is not specified to which deity the human sacrifice was offered. If to YHWH, it would mean that the God of Israel was susceptible to cultic persuasion even against his own people, whom he abandoned on that occasion. If we assume that the sacrifice was made to a god of the Moabites, it would mean that a pagan deity had prevailed over the God of Israel, likewise indicating, in effect, that the God of Israel had abandoned his people. Perhaps the ambiguity is intentional, or perhaps it was assumed that the reader would understand, without explicitly referring to a pagan deity by name, that a Moabite king would offer sacrifice to his own god. This seems more reasonable.

The result of that Moabite's sacrifice is precisely what Balak, another Moabite king, would have wished for. The Moabite king of 2 Kings 3 used the force of cultic worship, the efficacy of the extreme sacrifice, whereas Balak opted for execrations. Nevertheless, there would appear to be a thematic connection between the Balaam Pericope, both poems and narratives, and the incident recorded in 2 Kings 3. We could also cite the polemical encounters between Moses and Pharaoh, where magical activity played an important role. Note the emphasis on the punishment of the gods of Egypt, along with the Egyptians, making of the encounters between Moses and Pharaoh only the earthly counterpart of what was perceived to be a combat of gods (Exod 12:12, 33:4).

Not so with Balaam and Balak. From the first poem onward it is forcefully emphasized that the divine powers in control of Israel's fortunes are solidly on Israel's side, and won't allow Israel to be harmed. There is no polemic or challenge; no counterpower is envisioned. Does this mean that the sovereignty of the God of Israel was perceived as extending to other lands and peoples, and to non-Israelite diviners and seers, so that Balaam was completely under the power of Israel's God? To be sure, this is how matters are interpreted in the narratives, and quite emphatically so. But is this also the perception conveyed in the poems?

To explain the theological presuppositions underlying the Balaam poems, specifically, we must clarify how divine names are used and distributed in them. Who is, or, as is probable, who are the divine powers referred to and characterized in the Balaam poems, the very ones who exercise control over Balaam? In the second poem, Balaam once refers to YHWH as Israel's God: *YHWH ’elōhāw ‘immô* "YHWH, his God, is with him" (Num 23:21). This reference acknowledges YHWH to be the national God of Israel. YHWH is the King who protects his people from all harm. Based on this reference alone we might conclude that Balaam saw no chance of challenging the God of Israel.

Yet, in Balaam's titulary, which appears in the third and fourth poems, we encounter a veritable pantheon—El, Shadday and Elyon, with the only reference to YHWH being an aside about trees that YHWH planted. Finally, in three instances (Num 23:19, 22, 24), El alone is named as the divine actor. Together, El, Elyon and Shadday are the sources of Balaam's revelations, whereas the distinctive references to El speak of power, of divine acts of liberation and victory within history. El has horns like a wild ox, and he "acts" (the verb *p-‘-l*). Most striking of all, we read that El brought Israel out of Egypt! One could, therefore, read the relevant poetic passages as referring to West Semitic deities who coexisted and cooperated with YHWH, Israel's God. This reading of the poems presumes, of course, that El, Elyon and Shadday are not merely being used as epithets of the God of Israel, but as the names or appellations of discrete deities.

Even in such terms, it is unclear how we are to interpret the single instance of the direct parallelism *’Ēl//YHWH* in the first poem (Num 23:8). Balaam says that El has not authorized Israel's execration, and that YHWH has not pronounced Israel's doom. D. N. Freedman (1976) sees a further instance of the parallelism *YHWH//’Ēl* in the sequence of Numbers 23:21b–22, but this is unlikely. As has been explained in the Notes to Numbers 23:22, this verse is a refrain that interrupts the flow of the poem, so that Numbers 23:21b and 22 cannot be considered as directly parallel with each other. In any event, they are separate stichs, not hemistichs, and each exhibits its internal parallelism, which is not so in the case of Numbers 23:8. Numbers 23:8 is distinctive, therefore, because it pinpoints the divine power or powers interdicting the efficacy of Balaam's magic.

Some might question whether an Israelite poet would refer to the Syro-Canaanite god, El, in one hemistich, and to Israel's national God, YHWH, in the other in direct parallelism. It is similarly startling to find the liberation of the Israelites from Egypt attributed, on the face of it, to El. Some would consider this inconceivable. It is usually assumed, therefore, that the two parallel names refer to the same deity; that they are synonymous. When the poet says El he means YHWH, in functional terms. If so, all other references to El, as well as to Elyon and Shadday, in the Balaam poems would also be epithetical of YHWH. On this basis we would hypothesize that texts like the Balaam poems, though possibly originating in archives of the cult of El, the regional deity, were adapted by Yahwistic writers and reinterpreted to refer to YHWH, the God of Israel. Theologically, we would say that El merged with YHWH, with YHWH absorbing El. The result would be, in the case of the Balaam poems, that the liberation of the Israelites from Egypt, earlier attributed to the regional god, El, was now being accredited to the national God, YHWH, just as it was now YHWH who would not authorize the execration of Israel.

In effect, this is what we see happening in the poem cast as Moses' final blessing to the tribes of Jeshurun (Deut 33:25–29). This poem is actually of two parts: (a) an El poem celebrating Jeshurun/Israel's conquest and settlement of Canaan, and (b) a Yahwistic poem that resonates with the themes and diction of the El poem. The effect is to translate El's acts on Israel's behalf into those of YHWH. Let's see how it works:

(a) Deuteronomy 33:25–28—The works of El:

ên *ke'ēl, Yešūrûn There is none like El, oh Jeshurun!
Riding through the heavens to fight for you, and in his majesty the highest heavens.
Who *makes into dwellings the tents* of old, and *stretches the tent flaps* of time immemorial.
He drove out the enemy from before you, and commanded: "Destroy!"
So that Israel is encamped securely; on his own, Jacob-*El inhabits*
A land of grain and wine, whose heavens drip with dew.

(b) Deuteronomy 33:29: The works of YHWH:

You are privileged Israel, a people granted victory by YHWH;
A shield fighting for you and who is your majestic sword.
Your enemies surrender to you, and you trod upon their backs!

We have taken some liberties in our reading of these poetic excerpts, along lines proposed by several scholars, including Cross and Freedman (1975, 2nd edition 1997:69). The latter saw in verse 28 the verb ʿ*w-n*, from which the early Hebrew word *māʿôn* "dwelling" in verse 28. Accordingly, we vocalize ʿ*ān* as a masculine singular participle in place of Masoretic ʿ*ên*. This verb is also reflected in verse 27, where we identify a denominative of *māʿôn* "dwelling," namely: *mʿnh* = *meʿanneh* "to make into a dwelling." It was Ginsberg who understood verse 27 to refer to tents, *ʾohalê qedem* instead of Masoretic *ʾelōhê qedem* "God of time immemorial," and *yerîʿôt ʿôlām* instead of *zerō ʿōt ʿôlām* "the eternal arms." Directly relevant to the present discussion is the assumption that the Masoretes tendentiously vocalized *kāʾēl* "like The Deity" in Deuteronomy 33:25, altering originally indeterminate *keʾēl* "like El" and thereby reducing the name El to an epithet of the God of Israel.

In effect, Deuteronomy 33:29 serves as a commentary on Deuteronomy 33:25–28, and identifies YHWH as the redeemer of Israel in place of El. Note resonances of the former part of the poem in the latter part: The deity is again characterized as *ʿēzer*, as a force fighting at Israel's side, who possesses *gaʾawāh* "majesty." There is reference to the defeat of the *ʾôyēb* "enemy," and of secure sovereignty, albeit differently expressed. We also note themes shared by Deuteronomy 33:25–28, with the Balaam poems. There is, first of all, the reference to tents, if the suggested emendations be accepted. Then, too, the combination of *šakān* "to dwell," with adverbial *bādād* "on his own, alone" resonates with Numbers 23:9.

To return to the Balaam poems, themselves, we are prompted to ask: Is the reference in the second Balaam poem to YHWH as the national God of Israel to be compared with Deuteronomy 33:29, or, are we to compare the Balaam poems generally with the works of El such as are celebrated in Deuteronomy 33:25–28, where resonances of the Balaam poems are actually detectable? A decision for the latter would mean that there is no synthesis comparable to Deuteronomy 33:29 in the Balaam poems.

In contrast, an argument for the synthesis of El and YHWH in the Balaam poems could be made by referring to Exodus 6:2–8, a passage that has played a pivotal role in the history of modern Pentateuchal criticism. There, Elohim says to Moses:

> I am YHWH. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as El-Shadday, but I did not make myself known to them by my [true] name, YHWH."

The text goes on to say that, notwithstanding his obscurity, it was really YHWH who had been with the earliest members of the people all the while, first fulfilling his covenant with the patriarchs, and now responding to Israel's cry for help in Egypt. Several times it is emphasized that YHWH is Israel's redeemer who will liberate them from Egyptian bondage, and who, choosing them as his people, will become their God. YHWH had been manifest to earlier Israelites as El-Shadday, but now his true identity has emerged. El and YHWH are not two different deities, but merely different manifestations of the same divine force, YHWH.

What is rationalized in Exodus 6 as prior fact is, in reality, the outcome of a diachronic process on the theological level, and of progressive source-critical redaction on the textual level. In a word, it is synthesis. The patriarchs had actually worshipped the deity, El, variously known as El-Shadday and (El)-Elyon (cf. Deut 32:7–8). What their descendants were being told is that YHWH was taking over from El, and was henceforth to be worshipped as if he had always been their god. They should no longer turn to El for help, but to YHWH; and further, they should now believe that all that they had attributed to El in the past was really the work of YHWH. In summary, the text of Exodus 6:2–8 records the ascendancy of the national god, YHWH, whose cult was henceforth to be the only legitimate one in Israel. Do the Balaam poems reflect or express this same synthesis of El and Yahweh?

It is here argued that reference in the second Balaam poem to YHWH as Israel's national God is not comparable to the function of Deuteronomy 33:29 as a commentary on the El poem that preceded it. There is likewise a significant difference between Exodus 6 and the Balaam poems in their exposition of religious ideas. Exodus 6 is overt and explicit about changes and developments that have occurred, whereas the Balaam poems are esoteric. The point to be made is that El is not equated with YHWH in Numbers 23:8. Rather, El retains his identity, an identity enhanced throughout the Balaam orations. If the authors of the poems held that YHWH had taken over from El, then the proper noun, *’Ēl*, since it now referred to the God of Israel, would have lost its discreteness, and would have ben reduced to a common noun, meaning "deity, god." Given the overall diction of the Balaam poems, and the paucity of references to YHWH, it is questionable whether *’Ēl* is being used in them as a common noun meaning "god, deity." It would sound rather weak to begin a dramatic poem by saying: "The deity is no mortal that he would renege" (*lo’ ’îš ’ēl wiykazzēb*). It is more forceful to say: "El is no mortal that he would renege." Nor would we be inclined to render *mah pāʿal ’ēl* "What the deity intends to do" in Numbers 23:23, but rather "What El intends to do." The fact that between these two statements there is reference to YHWH as Israel's protector-God is not incompatible with retaining El's individuality. It may well be, after all, that we are reading material taken from an El archive that has not been synthesized as Yahwistic literature, and in which the Hebrew *’Ēl* is a proper name, not a common noun, and refers to another god.

It has been noted that in all of the second, third and fourth poems there are only two references to YHWH; one in Numbers 23:21, where YHWH is identified as Israel's God, and the other in Numbers 24:6, where we find a casual reference to trees planted by YHWH. We are reading original El literature that has been adapted to include YHWH, the God of Israel, but not to reduce El, or Elyon and Shadday for that matter. It may be more reasonable to hypothesize that YHWH has been admitted into the regional pantheon, than to assume that El has been absorbed by YHWH! The only possible counterindication comes, precisely, in the first poem, in Numbers 23:8, where the parallelism *ʾEl//YHWH,* could be taken to mean that both deignations refer to the same god. But, if so, we would have to translate this verse in the following way:

How can I curse whom the deity has not condemned?
How can I doom whom YHWH has not doomed?

It is worth noting that, except for the parallelism of *ʾĒl//YHWH* in the first Balaam poem (Num 23:8), there is probably not a single clear case of the direct parallelism *ʾĒl//YHWH,* or *YHWH//ʾĒl* in all of biblical literature. There are several syntactic structures in which *ʾēl* (singular) in the absolute state is joined to YHWH, including apposition, predication, attribution and so forth, and there are construct formations with *ʾEl,* but not direct, synonymous parallelism in sequential hemistichs. We have found only one possible though questionable instance in Psalm 10:12:

qûmāh YHWH, ʾēl neśāʾ yādekā!
ʾal tiškaḥ ʿanāwîm (Qere)

Attack YHWH, El raise your arm!
Do not forget the unfortunate.

Although this parallelism is probably not authentic, exploring Psalm 10 will prove to be of interest to our discussion, nonetheless. The Psalm as a whole is a petition dominated by wisdom motifs. The ways of the wicked are characterized repetitively. Three times the Psalmist attributes unworthy attitudes to the wicked, introducing his speeches by the cliche: *ʾāmar belibbô* "He says to himself." The second such attributed speech begins in verse 11:

ʾāmar belibbô:
šakaḥ ʾēl, histîr pānāw,
bal rāʾāh lāneṣaḥ.

He says to himself:
El has forgotten, he has hidden his face,
Not to see forever.

Then comes verse 12:

qûmāh YHWH, ʾēl neśāʾ yādekā;
ʾal tiškaḥ ʿanāwîm(Qere)

Arise YHWH, El raise your arm!
Do not forget the unfortunate.

The genuineness of this instance of the parallelism of *YHWH//ʾĒl* has been questioned since late antiquity, because it seems to be metrically intrusive and possibly because there was objection to its implications. LXX fractures the parallelism in Psalm 10:12 and reads: *ʾanástêthi, kúrie ʿo theós; hupsotheto ʿe cheir sou* "Rise up, Lord, the God, raise your arm!" The Vulgate follows suit: "Arise, Lord God; raise your hand!" Although the Hebrew *qûmāh YHWH* is an acknowledged form of address in biblical prosody (cf. Num 10:35, Ps 3:8, 7:7), the only similar parallelism elsewhere attested, with the same form of address, is in Psalm 3:8, where we read:

qûmāh YHWH, hôšîʿēnî ʾelōhay

Arise YHWH, rescue me, my God!

It is likely, pursuant to the preceding verse, Psalm 10:11, which refers to *ʾĒl,* that the text of Psalm 10:12 originally read:

qûmāh ʾĒl, neśāʾ yādekā

Arise El, raise your arm!

The name of YHWH may have been inserted secondarily, thereby generating the conventional form of address: *qûmāh* YHWH. This occurred because the Psalm, as a whole, resounds with the names of YHWH and Elohim, and virtually drowns out what was most probably an excerpt taken from an El archive. This is very different from the tenor of the Balaam poems, where El, Elyon and Shadday predominate. What is most intriguing about Psalm 10 is that it resonates the second Balaam poem. It is quite common to speak of *ʿāmāl* "harm" and *ʾāwen* "iniquity" when characterizing the wicked, but it is rare to speak of God as countenancing *ʿāmāl* or *ʾāwen,* as does Psalm 10:14. That image is found elsewhere only in Habakkuk 1:3, 13 and in Numbers 23:21, within the second Balaam poem (see Notes to Num 23:21). It is conceivable, therefore, that an artificial parallelism of *YHWH//ʾĒl* was generated in Psalm 10:12 on the model of the first Balaam poem (Num 23:8), but in this instance to bring an El passage into sync with the overall monotheistic character of the Psalm.

And so, we detect a pervasive avoidance of the synonymous parallelism *ʾĒl//YHWH* or *YHWH//ʾĒl* in biblical literature. Such parallelism as we have in the first Balaam poem would not be proper once *ʾEl* had been reduced to a common noun, because this divine name would have lost his individuality in the process. It is only the unsynthesized *ʾĒl,* when *ʾĒl* is a proper noun in the absolute state, that has the valence to serve as a synonymous parallel to *YHWH,* and this is what we find uniquely in the first Balaam poem.

By Whom Was Israel Blessed?

The Balaam poems convey a distinctive message, one that ought not to be lost: Israel has been blessed by the regional pantheon, not only by YHWH, the national God of Israel. It is not only YHWH, but also El, Elyon and Shadday who are on Israel's side against Moab, and against all who oppose Israel. Balaam is constrained by a coalition of divine powers. Rather than concluding that the power of Israel's God, YHWH, alone controlled the non-Israelite diviner, Balaam, we may conclude that YHWH and El joined forces to protect Israel and to redeem this people. Accordingly, the three deities who represent the sources of Balaam's esoteric knowledge—El, Elyon and Shadday—communicate to him prophecies of Israelite victories.

This analysis correlates with the evidence of the Balaam inscriptions from Deir ʿAlla. At the compound of Deir ʿAlla, as excavated in Level IX, where the Balaam inscriptions were discovered, El was the chief presiding deity. This is indicated by the opening lines of both Combination I and II. Thus, Combination I says of Balaam:

wyʾtw ʾlwh ʾlhn blylh, wyḥz mḥzh kmśʾ ʾl

Gods came to him at night,
then he beheld a vision according to the utterance of El.

The vision from El, communicated by gods associated with El, is the basis of all that follows in Combination I. Similarly, near the beginning of Combination II, we read:

[ddn] yrwy ʾl, wyʿbd ʾl byt ʿlmn

El sates himself with lovemaking; then El constructed an eternal home.

The rest of Combination II, at least up to line 17, describes conditions in El's necropolis.

We conclude, as regards the biblical Balaam poems, that El, Balaam's own, chief god, is favorable to Israel, and that there is unity within the regional pantheon on this score. When both El and YHWH had blessed Israel and neither would authorize curses against this people, Balaam had no recourse, even if he had wished ill for Israel, which was probably not the case. This is the message of the Balaam poems. It is here proposed that the Balaam poems speak for a circle of biblical authors who had not yet synthesized El with YHWH, and had not deprived El of his individual identity. They were rather devotees of a regional pantheon that was traditional within Israelite society. This orientation was shared by the authors of the early strands of the patriarchal narratives who depicted the first Israelites as devotees of El-Shadday and El-Elyon. Such ideas seem to have been especially prominent in Gilead of Transjordan, where the biblical Balaam poems were most probably written. The Transjordanian Israelites who authored the Balaam poems projected this regional orientation onto Balaam, a non-Israelite. They depicted Balaam as a devotee of El, but as one who was aware that YHWH, Israel's national god, also belonged to the regional pantheon. Further on, the question of Balaam's origins and identity will be addressed.

What is remarkable about the authors of the Balaam poems, if the above reconstruction be accepted, is that they carried the El tradition over into the national phase of Israel's retrojected history. It is one thing to read in Genesis 14, for example, that Abram shared in a sacred feast with a Canaanite priest-king, Melchizedek. He donated a tithe in support of his pagan temple, and allowed himself to be blessed in the name of El-Elyon, creator of heaven and earth, known in early Phoenician texts as *ʾl qn ʾrṣ* "El, creator of earth." It is quite another to credit El with Israel's liberation from Egypt and with Israel's victories on both sides of the Jordan, against Amalek of Cisjordan, and against Moab and Edom in Transjordan. In Deuteronomy 33:25–29 the role of El in bringing about the Israelite conquest of Canaan is not allowed to go unchallenged, and a verse is immediately added to translate El into YHWH. In the Balaam poems the pervasive role of El goes unchallenged, it being only acknowledged that YHWH, Israel's "King," is with his people. To substantiate this interpretation of the Balaam poems more must be said about the history of monotheism in biblical Israel.

A Brief Note on the History of Israelite Monotheism

Since the beginning of modern biblical scholarship, the early development of Israelite monotheism has been the subject of intense debate. This is especially so with respect to the stated requirement to worship the God of Israel to the exclusion of all other gods. Two radically different points of view stand at the extremes of the argument, with differing sorts of compromises in between. One view has it that the dictate of exclusive monotheism was established at the earliest period of national life, and that it was this idea that determined in practice the character of Israelite religion and the nature of cultic activity in Israel. Notwithstanding recurring anomalies and many notable lapses into idolatry of which the Bible speaks, and despite vehement denunciations by prophets like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the large masses of Israelites worshipped YHWH, the God of Israel, and did not, as a rule, worship other gods. This view has been most thoroughly advanced by Yehezkel Kaufmann, and has been endorsed by such biblical scholars as Jeffrey Tigay (1986) in his recent study of the epigraphic Hebrew onomasticon.

The prevalent view sees matters quite differently. The period of the First Temple is seen as one of religious diversity and growing confrontation, as a time when most Israelites and their leaders had not yet accepted in practice the full force of exclusive monotheism and continued to worship the deities of the traditional, regional pantheon alongside the God of Israel, if not at times in place of him. In this view, the advocates of exclusive monotheism did not prevail until the eve of the Babylonian Exile, in the late seventh century B.C.E., at the earliest. Even if we assume, as is reasonable, that YHWH, the God of Israel, was known to the people of Israel from very early times as their national God and was worshipped as such, this does not necessarily imply that YHWH was perceived as the sole deity to be worshipped. He may have been identified as one among a regional pantheon, which included Baal, El and Asherah, and, at times, probably Ashtoreth.

The Bible tells us more about the rejection of Baal in the breakup of the traditional pantheon, and the rejection of Asherah as a goddess, than it does about the changing perception of El. The conflict with the cult of Baal is a major theme in historical and prophetic literature. The series of Gideon tales, preserved in Judges 6 and following, are a case in point. Set in the period of Israelite settlement, the period of the Judges, these tales most probably reflect the religious climate within the northern kingdom of Israel during the ninth to eighth centuries B.C.E., when the conflict with the Baal cult was at its height. Gideon is a battle name; it means "the breaker, cutter," whereas Jerubaal was a family name that means "Baal raised" -the child (Levine 1996). It is akin to several Baal names known from the Samaria ostraca, like Meribaal, which is also the biblical name of one of Jonathan's sons (1 Chron 8:34, 9:40). Baal names cease in the court histories of Israel and Judah with personal names attributed to the generation of Saul's grandchildren.

Just consider the ironies of the Gideon stories: Here is Joash, bearing a Yahwistic name, and a scion of a noted Israelite clan, who names his son Jerubaal, and, what is more, operates a Baal altar with an Asherah image (or other object) near his home. Initially there is no criticism whatsoever of Joash's lifestyle; it may have been typical in the northern kingdom of the ninth century B.C.E., for all we know. Then the hero undergoes a series of religious experiences that dramatize the transition from the tolerant atmosphere of traditional religion to the polarized atmosphere of monotheistic confrontation, as Jerubaal and his father's family are brought to the point of religious commitment. Gideon had heard of YHWH, and of his mighty feats of deliverance from Egypt, but he could not understand why this powerful deity had given Israel into the power of Midian. Consequently, he had not been worshipping him. This is all in line with the narrative accounts of the progressive Israelite conquest of Canaan. The Israelite ascendancy over its enemies is interpreted as the victory of its national God, YHWH, while Baal is now depicted as the protector-god of the Midianites, who have become Israel's enemies. It is YHWH who brings victory over the Midianites, and it is he who must henceforth be worshipped exclusively. What YHWH had done at the Exodus, he will do again. The traditional pantheon has been dismembered, or at least that is what the author of the Gideon stories advocates.

The prophet whom Ginsberg (1960) calls First Hosea of the ninth century, of the reign of Ahab, denounces the Baal cult and the use of Baal names, and subsequently Jehu acts to put the Baal temple of Samaria out of business. The inscriptions from Kunṭillet ʿAjrud on the southern Judean border, dated to the late ninth century B.C.E., contain not only a probable reference to a goddess, an *asherah*, alongside YHWH, but also a hymn to Baal and El, in which YHWH is not mentioned at all (Meshel 1992, in *ABD* IV:103–109). In fact, the so-called theophany from Kunṭillet ʿAjrud is worth reading for what it tells us about religion at a southern Judean outpost at the end of the ninth century B.C.E. Since the name of YHWH does not appear in the theophany, we cannot be certain that it is of Israelite authorship, although this is almost surely the case.

The preserved text reads as follows:

wbzrḥ .ʾl. bṙ[qʿ
wymsn hrm [
wyḋkn ġnbm
wšdš ʿly [
lbrk. bʿl. bym mlḥmh
lšm [.] ʾl bym mlḥmh (text in Ahituv 1992:160)

Translation:

When El shines in the firmament,
The mountains melt away,
The hills are submerged.
[. . .].El.[. . .]
That Baal be blessed on the day of battle;
That El's name [be blessed] on the day of battle.

Baal and El are similarly addressed, although the actual theophany, with shining in heaven and the melting of mountains, is said of El. There is no reference to a goddess, although there are probable references to the goddess, Asherah, in the inscriptions discovered at Kunṭillet ʿAjrud. The context is that of war.

We have seen how Baal was ultimately discredited in monotheistic circles. The theophany of Kunṭillet ʿAjrud would have been regarded as highly improper in monotheistic circles at a later time. It is uncertain what happened to El in this process, because there is little evidence of conflict with El worship in biblical literature. It is not as if Baal was an evil deity and El a good one; they were both beneficent heaven deities who destroyed evil gods, as we now know from the Ugaritic myths, and who brought victory to their devotees, as the theophany from Kunṭillet ʿAjrud indicates. It was simply a matter of historic reality. The Baal cult posed a real threat to Yahwism in Northern Israel, as we learn from the Elijah cycle and from historical notations about Ahab's penchant for Baal worship in Samaria. There is no comparable record of prophetic denunciation of the cult of El, specifically. The closest we come to this is in the denunciations of improper sacrifice, or possibly of idolatry in Gilead and east of the Jordan by Hosea (6:4–10, 11:11), although there is no explicit reference to El worship, only to a bull cult. There are continuous prophetic denunciations of paganism and idolatry, but El is not a precise target.

We may assume from the persistent occurrence of theophoric personal names compounded with *ʾel*, including use of *Yiśrāʾēl* as the name of the people, and from numerous other indications, that the El cult had been absorbed by the Yahwists, and that reference to El came to connote reference to the God of Israel after synthesis set in. To put it another way: In later times, a devout Israelite monotheist would give his son an El name, because Yahwism had assimilated the cult of El. The same would not be allowable with respect to a Baal name, since the Baal cult had been condemned. Just when this process reached fruition and the scope of its application in biblical Israel are not known for certain. It would seem that well into the eighth century some biblical writers were still operating with a pantheon that included an unsynthesized El. It is logical to conclude that Asherah was discredited along with Baal, although too little is known of this process to allow for certain conclusions (T. Frymer-Kensky 1992:153–161).

This situation would parallel what we observe among the Ammonites of the seventh century, except that the Israelites worshipped a different national god. In the Ammonite onomasticon, almost half of the personal names are El names, with the national God, Milkom, appearing as a component in only a relatively few personal names. YHWH (registered as *Yw* in the Samaria ostraca) was popular since earlier times, but he, too, predominated in the Hebrew onomastica, biblical and epigraphic, only toward the end of the seventh century B.C.E. (Pardee 1988). Building on the prophetic teachings of Hosea, the Deuteronomic movement, which originated in the northern kingdom of the eighth century B.C.E., denounced this pantheon and the principal cult objects associated with it—the *ʾăšērāh* and the *maṣṣēbāh* "cultic stela."

The above attempt at reconstructing the early development of monotheism in biblical Israel owes much to recent discussions of this subject by a number of scholars, most notably M. S. Smith, in his book *The Early History of God* (1990), and Saul Olyan in his monograph, *The Cult of Asherah* (1988). Although Smith uses the designation "Canaanite" where we would rather say "West-Semitic," since the Ugaritic, Aramaic and other Syrian evidence ought not to be classified as Canaanite, his general approach to religious development reflects a regional perspective, taking into account the situation among Israel's neighbors. Because Smith's approach is primarily thematic rather than historical or institutional., he devotes most of his attention to the integration of mythic themes associated with Baal and El, rather than with what must have been a protracted political and institutional struggle in ancient Israel over control of the cult. Smith pays relatively little attention to the polemical nature of religious development, a dominant theme in biblical literature. And yet he is able to argue persuasively that early Israelites worshipped El and Baal. Significantly, Smith points to the prominence of the El cult among the Canaanites of biblical times, showing that it was a part of the immediate religious environment. Thus, the Canaanites of Shechem worshipped *ʾēl berît* (Judg 9:46) just as they did *baʿal berît* (Judg 9:4). Significantly, *ilbrt* is one of El's titles in Ugaritic literature (M. S. Smith 1990:11). Like the Israelites, the Canaanites were also living within a regional religious framework.

Also relevant to the present discussion of El and YHWH is Smith's analysis of Deuteronomy 32:6–7. He notes that virtually every statement about YHWH expressed in this passage echoes what is said about El in Ugaritic and early Phoenician texts. Accordingly, we may conclude that Deuteronomy 32, presented as a parting admonition of Moses, must surely have been composed after El was synthesized with YHWH. The Balaam poems, in contrast, were composed before this synthesis took place, so that they portray El, Elyon and Shadday as independent beings. Olyan treats a subject referred to by Smith, the preeminence of a goddess in the early Israelite cult, and he is more attentive to the polemical character of the monotheistic movement. Olyan seeks to explain the rejection of the cult of Asherah, which he attempts to identify historically and culturally.

Whereas both El and Baal lived on in the motifs of monotheistic poetry, their cultic destinies in biblical Israel were radically different, as has been shown. What is remarkable about the Balaam poems is that they reflect a religious climate in which El was one of the deities worshipped by Israelites alongside YHWH, and in consonance with Israel's neighbors in Transjordan, Phoenicia and Syria. The regional pantheon was a pan-national phenomenon, in which Israel was a participant. The footprints of the El archive, if we may call it that, are clearly perceptible in biblical literature. What we are looking for, specifically, is unsynthesized El literature. It is significant, as has been noted, that the *māšāl* of Sheol in Isaiah 14:4–21 mentions El and Elyon. The arrogant king of Babylon aspires to elevate his throne higher than the stars of El, and to resemble Elyon. He wants to establish his seat in the mountain of the divine council, in the far recesses of Zaphon. As mentioned, M.D. Cassuto (1954) identified Isaiah 14 as a source attesting the Syro-Canaanite god, El, in biblical literature. Thee was no theological problem in doing so because that *māšāl* puts words into the mouth of a pagan king regarding El. There is no reference in Isaiah 14 to Israel as being in any relationship to El. The biblical author cited a *māšāl* from an El archive, and applied it to the king of Assyria, whom he calls the king of Babylon.

Cassuto would have been fascinated, nevertheless, to learn of Combination II at Deir ʿAlla, which bears many literary affinities to Isaiah 14. It describes a nether world, quite possibly even called *sʾl* (= *Šeʾôl*), and what is more, informs us that it was El who had built this *byt ʿlmn* "eternal home, necropolis." Furthermore, Combination I at Deir ʿAlla mentions the establishment of a divine *mwʿd* (= *môʿēd*), just as Isaiah 14:13 makes reference to *har môʿēd* "the mountain of the [divine] council." Surely, the *māšāl* of Isaiah 14 qualifies as unsynthesized El literature, wherein the individuality of this deity is fully acknowledged. There are many excerpts taken from El archives preserved in the Psalms and in prophetic writings, most of which have been adapted to the strict monotheistic outlook. In some cases, whole passages can be identified. We have mentioned that Deuteronomy 33:25–29, a poem extolling the works of El on Israel's behalf, was interpreted to apply to YHWH in a striking example of inner-biblical commentary. It has also been suggested that parts of the dialogues of Job derive from an El archive (S. A. Kaufman 1985).

The Sitz-im-Leben *of the Biblical Balaam Poems*

In the analysis of the Balaam inscriptions from Deir ʿAlla, it was concluded, on archaeological grounds and through carbon 14 testing, that they were written on the walls of one of the buildings at Deir ʿAlla ca. 800 B.C.E., or soon after that date. Most likely, they remained on display throughout most of the eighth century B.C.E., probably until the Assyrians invaded Transjordan, a process that commenced in 734 B.C.E. On historical grounds, it was concluded that Israelites constituted a major, if not the major, component of the population of the Valley of Sukkoth during the eighth century, prior to the Assyrian invasions. It is entirely possible, therefore, that the Balaam inscriptions from Deir ʿAlla are of Israelite authorship, notwithstanding their mythological character, and that they speak for at least some of the Gileadite Israelites. The strong literary affinities with biblical literature, and in particular with the biblical Balaam poems, support this hypothesis, although the inscriptions themselves provide no historical indicators. As far as we know, they contain no names of places, peoples or rulers. We cannot, as a consequence, relate the calamity projected in the Balaam inscriptions to any specific historical events. All we can say is that, if our interpretation is correct, Balaam was memorialized in the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions for having saved his land and people, namely, the area of the Valley of Sukkoth and its population, from some past calamity.

One may only speculate as to which calamity this might have been. There are reasons for favoring military and political disasters over natural calamities. As Amos put it, the day of defeat is one of *ḥōšek welōʾ* ʾ*ôr* "darkness and not light" (Amos 5:18–20), which sounds like what is being depicted in the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions. Speaking of Amos, we find reference to a major earthquake in Amos 1:1, the caption of the book, dated to ca. 760 B.C.E. Some have speculated that this event, long remembered (Zech 14:4–5), may be relevant to the interpretation of the Deir ʿAlla calamity (Willoughby 1992, in *ABD* I:203–212).

There is no question that the biblical Balaam poems of Numbers 23–24 are of Israelite authorship; the only question is which Israelites wrote them, those west of the Jordan or those east of it, in Transjordan, a possibility now raised by the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions. There is also the question of when they were written. These poems provide some historical indicators; they name kings, countries and peoples, but we have no corollary evidence of an archaeological or a documentary character by which to date them. Their traditional context is, of course, the period after the forty years of wandering when the Israelites were making their way to the Promised Land, but the traditional chronology cannot be accepted as historical. It is reasonable to hypothesize that the four Balaam poems, which extol Israelite power and hold out no hope whatsoever to the Moabites (and possibly to the Edomites, either) or to the Amalekites, reflect the same realities as those of the Heshbon Ballad preserved in Numbers 21. In the Comments to Numbers 21 it was suggested that the Heshbon Ballad was written in the first half of the ninth century B.C.E., in the period preceding Mesha's campaigns to retake North Moab from the Israelites. It was noted that, beginning in the early ninth century B.C.E., Omri, and later his successors, took measures to consolidate Israelite hegemony in North Moab, exactly as Mesha reports in his retrospective summary of events prior to his reign. These military campaigns and the fortification of towns in North Moab were calculated to defend northern Israel's eastern frontier from Aramaean expansion.

Thus, the devastation of North Moab, which the Heshbon Ballad portrays, seems to be precisely what the Mesha Stele records as having happened before this king came to power and set about liberating North Moab. Now, this is also what the fourth of the Balaam poems depicts. The "star" who will arise from

Jacob/Israel will devastate Moab, and deport the inhabitants of Ar, just north of the Arnon (cf. Notes to Num 21:28 with Notes to Num 24:19). To put it simply, it is likely that the fourth Balaam poem correlates contextually with the Heshbon Ballad. Furthermore, it is significant that the third Balaam poem alludes to the Israelite defeat of the Amalekites. Quite possibly there is a symmetry to be observed in this reference: The Amalekites are, indeed, associated with Edom in Genesis 36:16, but Numbers 13:29 places them in the Negeb, and their seasonal expeditions took them into the Ephraimite hill country (Judg 12:15), and westward, to Philistine territory near Ziklag (1 Sam 30:1–2). Most telling is the mention of *ʿîr ʿAmālēq* "the Amalekite town" in 1 Samuel 15:5, in that same region, where Kenites also lived (Mattingly 1992c, in *ABD* I:16–171). The point is that the defeat of the Amalekites may have been taken as a symbol of Israelite victory west of the Jordan in parallel with the Israelite victory over the Moabites east of the Jordan. The first two poems say, in effect, that Israel cannot be ejected from Transjordan, that they are a powerful force occupying a vast area of settlement. Once again, the period that best fits these descriptions is the first half of the ninth century B.C.E., the period preceding Mesha's campaigns.

If this time frame is accepted, the biblical Balaam poems antedate the Balaam inscriptions from Deir ʿAlla by more than a half century. If the biblical Balaam poems celebrate Israelite power in Moab during the reign of Omri and his successors before the middle of the ninth century B.C.E., the Balaam inscriptions from Deir ʿAlla may memorialize the sparing of Gilead from Mesha's reconquest, begun in the early forties of the ninth century. In other words, the events referred to in the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions and even the actual composition of the texts may antedate the time of their placement on the walls of Deir ʿAlla. The advantage of this suggestion is to associate both Balaam collections with the same historical events, albeit with different phases of them, and to relate both collections to the Moabites, a relationship explicit in the biblical poems but nowhere mentioned in the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions, themselves. On this basis, the Balaam texts from Deir ʿAlla represent one version of an epic known in Gilead, and the biblical Balaam poems represent another, earlier version. In the same way, the biblical Balaam narratives could be said to represent yet a third version of the same epic. It is worth considering that both the biblical Balaam poems and the poetry of Numbers 21, including the Heshbon Ballad, are products of Transjordanian Israelite creativity. This assignment might not have come to mind as an alternative to northern Israelite creativity west of the Jordan, were it not for the discovery of the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions, which has altered our perceptions of the overall cultural profile of Transjordan in the ninth and eighth centuries B.C.E.

The mythological character of the Balaam texts from Deir ʿAlla, and the fact that the name of YHWH does not appear in them, suggest that the Israelites for whom they speak, if the Israelite attribution is correct, were heterodox. They were similar to the Israelites for whom the theophany from Kunṭillet ʿAjrud speaks, for that composition mentions Baal and El but not YHWH. Either the alleged Israelites at Deir ʿAlla did not worship YHWH at all, and may be classified as pagan Israelites, or, like those at Kunṭillet ʿAjrud, may be regarded as Israelites who most likely worshipped YHWH and El, and other gods, but worshipped them separately. We may be witnessing the phenomenon of cultic coexistence, whereby the same Israelites worshipped YHWH in his shrine, and El in his. Mesha mentions a temple of YHWH (a virtually certain textual restoration), which stood in Nebo at the middle of the ninth century B.C.E., so there can be no doubt about the establishment of the cult of YHWH in North Moab, and there is little reason to doubt that the same was true in Gilead. It is more reasonable, based on what we know, to avoid the mutually exclusive conclusion that Transjordanian Israelites of the early eighth century B.C.E. had to decide between YHWH and other gods. Even those for whom the biblical Balaam poems speak were El worshippers who accepted YHWH as Israel's national God, but did not worship Him exclusively. Nor are we bound by the usual alternatives of "pure" and "polluted" cults.

Three additional features of the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions that differentiate them from the biblical Balaam poems bear comment. There is, first of all, the presence of an astrally synthesized fertility goddess, Shagar-and-Ishtar. Now, the goddess Asherah is undoubtedly present at Kunṭillet ʿAjrud at about the same time that the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions were placed on the walls. It took centuries until the objection to goddesses became the rule in Israelite cultic experience west of the Jordan. The presence of a goddess in the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions does not, therefore, argue against their Israelite authorship. Israelites have been known to worship Ashtoreth (1 Kings 11:5, 33). Then, too, the prominence of divinatory magic in the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions contrasts with the statement in the second biblical Balaam poem that Jacob/Israel either had no need for *naḥaš* "augury" and *qesem* "divination" or that such magic would be ineffectual against them. In the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions, Balaam has recourse to several sorts of magic, and the function of magical activity is pivotal in freeing the goddesses from the edict of the divine council. Furthermore, the calamity to come is depicted in the idiom of a celestial omen.

The differing attitude toward magic as between the two versions of the Balaam saga may be a function of the mythological character of the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions. The biblical Balaam acted under the orders of a pantheon that was united in its support of Israel, whereas Balaam at Deir ʿAlla was participating in a war between El and his associates and an inimical, probably rebellious, council of divinities. The utilization of magic in the unfolding of the Deir ʿAlla epic is generated by such mythological combat; it is a mechanism for protecting the goddess from the anti-El forces. Balaam is able to use his divinatory skills in a good cause. The Balaam of the biblical poems is in a different position. He is sent by an unrivaled pantheon to bless Israel, and to announce Israel's dominance over the Moabites.

COMMENT 2: THE BALAAM NARRATIVES

Theologically, the narratives of Numbers 22–24 may be classified as strictly monotheistic literature, in which references shift between two designations of the God of Israel, YHWH and ʾElohim. In effect, the Balaam narratives represent a commentary on the poems, and seem to be, with the exception of the Tale of the Jenny (Num 22:22–35), whose literary function has already been discussed in the Notes, the work of a single author who utilized diverse, available sources. One is at a loss to assign the narratives to J or E, or to JE of the rest of Numbers, where one can usually trace how the two original sources were combined. In the narratives of Numbers 22–24 we observe an almost playful alternation of the two divine names, *YHWH* and *ʾElōhîm*. Thus, in Numbers 23:3, Balaam bids Balak await word from YHWH, and, in the following verse, it is *ʾElōhîm* who communicates with Balaam in response. Significantly, there is no mention of El, or usage of the common noun *ʾel* in any of the narratives of Numbers 22–24. The premise of the narratives is that all Balaam's activities were controlled by Israel's God, designated either as *YHWH* or *ʾElōhîm*. Clearly, the author of the narratives understood the occurrences of *ʾēl*, *ʾelyôn* and *šadday* in the Balaam poems as epithets of the God of Israel.

From the very outset (Num 22:8), Balaam emphasized his subservience to Israel's God, who initially refused him permission to accompany Balak's messengers (Num 22:13). Balaam subsequently insisted that he could not transgress against "the command of YHWH, my God (*YHWH ʾelōhay*; Num 22:18). This statement virtually makes of Balaam a devotee of YHWH. The non-Israelite seer was not merely under YHWH's control, awaiting instructions from him, but actually acknowledged YHWH as his own deity. Once Balaam arrived in Moab, further developments occurred in his relationship to *YHWH/Elohim*. Balaam offers sacrifices of attraction to *YHWH/Elohim*, who responds with communications. The procedure is as follows: Balaam finds a spot that is propitious, a high vantage point where he can see at least part of the Israelite encampment. He sets up seven altars and offers burnt offerings on them. The *ʿolah* is an offering of attraction, a function that it continued to have throughout the history of the Israelite-Jewish cult. There is, accordingly, nothing unusual about the choice of this offering. What is distinctive in the Balaam narratives is perambulation; the seer or diviner walks about in an attempt to encounter the deity, as if by chance.

Normally, sacrificial offerings are positioned at fixed, consecrated sites.

There is no need to go about looking for the deity; one need only sanctify a given site and then proceed to attract the deity to it. This is what we learn from Elijah's burnt offering, its manner of preparation and execution (1 Kings 18). The *ʿānān* "cloud" tradition has the God of Israel indicate sites at which sacrifices can be properly offered by signaling where the migrating or advancing Israelites were to encamp. The cloud, alighting on the tent in which the Ark of the Covenant was placed, effectively consecrated the spot, and sacrificial offerings could be brought there (see Notes to Num 9:15–16; Levine 1993:298–299). As a theme in the Balaam narratives, perambulation is the earmark of the non-Israelite seer who is on an unsure footing with the God of Israel. It is the act of one who is not at all certain that he will be granted a response from the deity. This is brought out by implication in the narrative transition to the third poem. When Balaam realizes that YHWH is pleased with his blessings and confident that YHWH will connect with him, perambulation ceases. Balaam merely sets his gaze on the desert, and the spirit of YHWH alights upon him (Num 24:1–2). This is an experience otherwise restricted to Israelite prophets and judges, and the fact that Balaam experiences it indicates that his status has changed. He is now tantamount to being an Israelite prophet. Significantly, in the introductions to the first two poems, it is consistently YHWH, not Elohim, who places the actual words of the poetic orations into Balaam's mouth (Num 23:5, 16–17). In the case of the third poem, the phenomenology changes, but it is the spirit of YHWH that alights upon Balaam (Num 24:2). Again, in the transition from the third to the fourth poems, there is reference to YHWH's words (Num 24:13). It would seem that forensic revelation is a function of the named deity, YHWH, rather than of Elohim.

In Numbers 22:7, we read that Balak's delegation to Balaam brought along payment for *qesāmîm* "divination," but in Numbers 24:2 we read that Balaam, on the occasion of the third oration, ceased having recourse to *neḥāšîm* "augury," although he continued to prepare sacrifices of attraction. One is prompted to ask what place *qesāmîm* and *neḥāšîm* have in a relationship with the God of Israel, to begin with. The impression is that references to augury and divination function as local color, representing what is more or less expected of a pagan seer. Such techniques play a major role in the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions, where Balaam sets about freeing the goddess Shagar-and-Ishtar from the edict of the sinister divine council. In the progression of the Balaam narratives it is ironic that no sooner did Balaam state in the second poem (Num 23:23) that Israel has no need of *naḥaš* "augury" or *qesem* "divination" that we read in the transition to the third poem (Num 24:1) that Balaam did not, as he had done previously, have recourse to *neḥāšîm*! Balak's repeated offers of great riches as an inducement are also part of the popular perception of how prophets, seers and magical practitioners operated in biblical times.

Balaam's persistent refusal to be rewarded for what he knew he couldn't accomplish cast him in a good professional light, as a diviner with principles. In this respect, he resembled Elisha who refused Naaman's offers of reward (2 Kings 5).

The obsession in the narratives is with Balaam's subservience. Once again, if we extract the Tale of the Jenny (Num 22:22–35), Numbers 22 is all about whether Balaam is free to accompany Balak's messengers or not. The assumption is that if he accompanied them he would be accepting Balak's assignment (Num 22:2–21). Once this issue is settled, the narrator shifts to another strategy: Balaam is to appear to be doing his job, whereas he was, in fact, constrained from doing so. It is curious that Balak becomes a believer, notwithstanding his frustration and a degree of what we would call "denial." After suffering two failures, he finally suggested a change of venue in the hope that YHWH might yet allow execrations against Israel (Num 23:23). After the first failure, it had occurred to Balak that a change of venue might help, but he didn't yet acknowledge YHWH's supreme role. Although the dynamics are different, the Balaam narratives are in a way reminiscent of the Moses saga. In both instances there is much reporting back and forth, and great persistence. There is also need for considerable persuasion before the non-Israelite gets the point about who is really in charge, and what YHWH's relationship to the people of Israel is.

Apart from the magical significance of visual contact, it is clear from a literary point of view that all of the subsequent maneuvering in search of effective visual contact is a take-off on a poetic verse, where we read that Balaam is awestruck by his view of the Israelite encampment (Num 23:9). In other words, the magical technique of focused, visual contact, the targeting that makes execrations effective, boomerangs; it becomes a liability. Balaam's view of the Israelite encampment shows him that Israel is immune from execration by virtue of being blessed. So, it is now better for Balaam to see only a section of the Israelite encampment, not all of it. There is the subtle implication that if vulnerable areas on the extremities of the Israelite encampment could be targeted, execrations could penetrate and do their work. There are other resonances of the poems in the narratives. As explained in Notes to Numbers 22:8, the verbal forms that mean "to curse, pronounce execrations" appearing in the narratives derive from a geminate root, *q-b-b*. The situation in the poems is more complex, because in Numbers 23:8 we apparently have a unique occurrence of the root *q-b-h* alongside the geminate *q-b-b*. In the narratives the geminate verb *q-b-b* occurs no less than seven times (Num 22:11, 17, 23:11, 13, 25, 27, 24:10). In the narratives, the verb *q-b-b* alternates with *ʾ-r-r* "to execrate," a verb that, however, also occurs in the poems. Both in poetry and prose, the antonym is consistently *berek* "to bless."

The narratives carry the subject of blessing and cursing forward through the third poem, even though the major break in the poems themselves comes after the second poem. The first two poems define Balaam's role in terms of blessing and cursing, whereas the third and fourth poems are predictions of Israelite victories. And yet, the narrator doesn't break until the introduction to the fourth poem, where Balaam, after repeating to Balak a final time that he had been powerless to countermand the will of Israel's God, YHWH, offers on his own initiative to inform Balak what Israel will do to Moab in the future. It has been noticed that here, too, the visual aspect comes into play: In the first poem Balaam says that he sees and gazes (the parallel verbs *rā'āh* and *šûr*) and in the last poem he says that he sees and gazes (again, the verbs *rā'āh* and *šûr*) into the distant future. Space turns into time. For the narrator the issue never changed, however. Balaam was forbidden to attempt any disablement of Israel, but he was not forbidden to forewarn Moab of its future defeat!

We cannot be precise in dating the Balaam narratives. They may postdate the compilation of JE, usually assigned to the seventh century B.C.E. (Levine 1993:48–49). It has already been explained that these narratives do not lend themselves to the usual breakdown into J and E, or even resemble JE, which is the product of the "braiding" and "hinging" of the two sources. The Balaam narratives seem to be the work of an author who was acquainted with JE, or at least with its component parts, and who spun a tale of irony, amplifying cues provided by the Balaam poems. In this scheme, the Tale of the Jenny may be postexilic.

COMMENT 3: THE THREE APPENDED PROPHECIES: CLUES TO THEIR HISTORICAL SETTING

As has been observed, three brief prophecies were appended to the four Balaam poems so as to give Balaam a reputation as a prophet to the nations. On this basis, one would expect to discern thematic links or clues associating the Balaam poems with the appended prophecies, thereby suggesting to the reader that they, too, were the words of Balaam. In the case of the Amalekite prophecy (Num 24:20), the link is the allusion to the Amalekites in the third Balaam poem, in Numbers 24:7, where we read that the king of Jacob/Israel will be exalted above Agag (see Notes to Num 24:7). The descendants of Cain in the second prophecy (Num 24:21–22) are really the Edomites, as mention of a firm nest in the rock, a veiled allusion to Petra, would indicate. It has already been suggested that the prophecy against Edom in the fourth Balaam poem (Num 24:18) may be an interpolation. In the same spirit, a further prophecy against Edom would have been appended in Numbers 24:21–22.

It is more difficult to find a thematic link connecting the third appended prophecy (Num 24:23–24) to the Balaam poems. It speaks of an invasion of Syria by sea, by a fleet of Kittim, usually understood to be inhabitants of Cyprus. Conceivably, the clue lies in the reference to Assyrian subjugation of Edom in the second appended prophecy. The link would then be internal, triggered by a reference to the Assyrians, and the third appended prophecy would be once removed from the themes of the Balaam poems, themselves.

The *Sitz-im-Leben* of the appended prophecies virtually defies identification. The prophecies of Obadiah may hold a partial solution regarding the second of these prophecies (Raabe 1996:31–33). That prophecy against Edom bears close affinities to the overall diction and themes of Obadiah. Obadiah speaks of the punishment of the Edomites, and others, who took advantage of Judah's weakness prior to and around the time of the Babylonian campaigns, and made incursions into the Levantine coast and inland at the end of the seventh and at the beginning of the sixth centuries B.C.E. This was a period of westward Edomite expansion. The final outcome of the Babylonian invasions was, among other things, the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. The reference to Assyria's victory may, therefore, be imprecise, the real intent being the Babylonian destruction.

A possible clue to the historical setting of the third appended prophecy may come from Isaiah 23, an oracle on the fate of Sidon and Tyre. In his informative study of this chapter, E. Lipinsky (1978) argues that that the primary stratum of Isaiah 23, an elegy on the fate of Sidon, refers to the destruction of the city by Essarhadon in 677 after the Assyrians had crushed a Sidonian rebellion. The rebellion may have been led by the forces of Taharqa, the Nubian ruler of Egypt who enlisted the Sidonians in his cause. Essarhadon's annals also mention the participation of Sanduarri, a Cilician prince. The dictional link between Isaiah 23 and the third appended prophecy of Numbers 24:23–24 comes in Isa 23:1: *mibbō’ mē’ereṣ Kittîm* "on the homecoming from the land of Kittim," a reference to homeward passage of the large merchant ships of the Sidonians, "the ships of Tarshish," from Cyprus to the Levantine coast. The Cilicians of Anatolia would qualify as attackers "from the northland" (*miśśemō’l*), who attacked Assur and parts of Syria, but were ultimately repulsed by the Assyrians. This and the other conjectures presented above are hardly adequate to the task of identifying historical settings reliably.

COMMENT 4: THE FIGURE OF BALAAM AND THE PLACE OF THE BALAAM PERICOPE IN BIBLICAL LITERATURE

The Balaam of the poems is portrayed as a non-Israelite seer, who, according to the analysis presented here, would have flourished in the early ninth century B.C.E., if he was not merely a legendary figure. When we speak of the Balaam poems, we are speaking of biblical compositions that were, so we are told by the narrator and/or the person who affixed captions to the poems, spoken by one, Balaam, the son of Beor; it is the narrator who fixed the identity of the speaker, for the poems themselves do not internally identify their speaker or author in any other way. The first poem merely identifies the speaker as one brought by Balak from Aram. Such an identity would, however, fit the time and place. In a period of Aramaean expansion into Transjordan, a contemporary poet might understandably regard a seer and diviner imported from the Aramaean homeland as possessing the best skills available, on an international scale.

Historically, the first extra-biblical mention of Balaam to date is in the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions of the early eighth century B.C.E. The biblical narrator most likely got the story of Balak and Balaam from a relatively early source, perhaps the Elohist, although he could have learned about Balaam, the son of Beor, directly from the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions. Micah (6:5), whenever it was composed, refers to the two figures, Balaam and Balak, as if their relationship were known to the reader. So, we are dealing with a figure, real or legendary, who was known in Gilead in the early eighth century B.C.E., and whose role may have been known in northern Israel later in the same century.

How the author of the narratives understood Balaam's national identity is less certain, and in Notes to Numbers 22:5 we have shown that this complex verse, which tells whence Balaam was invited and, presumably, where he hailed from, has been edited more than once since late antiquity. It is probable that the original author of Numbers 22:5 regarded Balaam as a resident of the land of the Ammonites, and wrote: *ʾereṣ benê Ammô[n]*, "the land of the Ammonites" (as in the Septuagint). A subsequent redactor found this origin problematic vis-à-vis the first poem, and dropped final *mem*, leaving *ʾereṣ benê ʿammô* "the land of his people," an unlikely phrase.

All of this has no conclusive bearing on the provenance of the biblical Balaam poems, themselves, which may well be Transjordanian Israelite creations, but surely Israelite creations, wherever they were composed. The Balaam texts from Deir ʿAlla are clearly indigenous compositions, however we identify their author(s), whether as Transjordanian-Israelite, or as Transjordanian non-Israelite. The question of Balaam's specific country of origin, for all of its curiosity, is not, therefore, nearly as significant as is the provenance of the literary compositions associated with him, or the roles attributed to him in biblical prose and poetry, and in the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions.

In its final form, the Balaam Pericope is cast in the presettlement period, when the Israelites were on their way to the Promised Land. It is curious that Moses is nowhere mentioned in Numbers 22–24, yet another indication of their separate authorship. Even the designations of the subject people are less than precise in most cases. In the superscription of Numbers 22:2–3, we read of *Yiśrāʾēl* and *benê Yiśrāʾēl,* but the narratives of Numbers 22–23 speak only of *ʿam* "a people," *hāʿām* "the people," (or *hāʿām hazzeh* "this people"), or of *haqqahal* "the group." It is only in Numbers 24 that we find *Yiśrāʾēl* as the narrator's designation for the collective (Num 24:1–2). This change in terms of reference within the narratives coincides with the break in the agenda of the poems already noted. After all, the third and fourth poems speak of Israelite victories. Some would undoubtedly conclude that the narratives of Numbers 23–24 were by a different author, but this conclusion is hardly necessary.

In a sense, the denigration of Balaam begins in the Tale of the Jenny (Num 22:22–35), where he is ridiculed (see Notes to Num 22:22–35). The first overt step comes in Numbers 31:8, where the priestly historiographer goes out of his way to inform the reader that the Israelites not only slew the five kings of Midian, but also Balaam, the son of Beor, along with them. (This theme is echoed in Jos 13:22.) The clue is the Baal Peor incident of Numbers 25. Numbers 23:28 relates that Balak had taken Balaam to the summit of Peor, associated with the pagan deity of the site, Baal Peor, in Numbers 25:3, 6, and especially with abbreviated Peor of Numbers 25:18. There is the innuendo, one amplified by later Rabbinic interpretation, that while at the site of Peor Balaam did not stop at informing Balak what would happen to Moab in the future, but that he may have also staged the cultic celebration at that site (J. Baskin 1976). A second step is the interpolation in Deuteronomy 23:5b–6, which says of Balaam that he had sought to curse Israel, or had actually done so, but that YHWH, Israel's God, converted his curses into blessings (cf. Jos 24:9–10, Neh 13:2).

One can only speculate on the motivations for the denigration of a seer who was so highly praised by Micah and celebrated in the Torah tradition of the Balaam Pericope. This trend probably had something to do with changing attitudes toward the Midianites, in particular, or toward the Transjordanian peoples, in general; attitudes conditioned by Israel's changing fortunes with respect to them. There is also the matter of changing attitudes toward the Transjordanian Israelites, themselves, in biblical literature. When all is said and done, the Balaam Pericope celebrates the glory days of the Transjordanian Israelite communities. Like so much of Torah literature, it retrojects later events and situations into the Wilderness Period, and lays a foundation for the actual historical relations of the Israelite kingdoms with neighboring peoples. There was a time when the Transjordanian Israelites were blessed by YHWH, their national God, and also by El, the dominant deity of Transjordan.

COMMENT 5: THE BALAAM INSCRIPTIONS FROM DEIR ʿALLA

Introduction

In 1967, a Dutch expedition under the archaeologist H. Franken, after several seasons of excavations, discovered inscriptions on plaster at Tell Deir ʿAlla, a site located about eight kilometers east of the Jordan, not far from the northern bank of the Yabbok/Zerqa river, which flows into the Jordan (Map 1). The discovery was made in a stratum known as Level IX, dated in the late ninth to eighth centuries B.C.E. In these texts, the name *blʿm brbʿr* "Balaam, the son of Beor" appears once, fully and legibly, and several more attestations of the name may be restored with certainty. This fact alone made the discovery at Deir ʿAlla striking, and it was soon reported. Less than ten years later, in 1976, these texts were published with extensive commentary under the title *Aramaic Texts from Deir ʿAlla*, by J. Hoftijzer, with a paleographic analysis by G. van der Kooij, and an archaeological introduction by H. Franken, the excavator (Hoftijzer 1976). Since then, an impressive literature has amassed on the subject of the Deir ʿAlla texts, with the participation of many scholars the world over. A conference was held at Leiden in 1989, which produced a volume of important studies entitled *The Balaam Texts from Deir ʾAlla* Reevaluated (Hoftijzer 1991). At the present time, the plaster texts are displayed in the Amman Museum, and further excavations at the site of Deir ʿAlla have been conducted over the years by M. Ibrahim and G. van der Kooij.

The main problem affecting interpretation of the plaster inscriptions was their physical condition at the time of discovery. The clods of plaster were found on the floor, after they had fallen from inner walls of a building, one cluster at some distance from the other. Once assembled with great difficulty and considerable acumen, the investigators encountered serious gaps and faced problems of alignment. A major realignment was soon made by A. Caquot and A. Lemaire (1977). There were also sections where the writing, which had been done with a special type of nib, was faded. Beyond problems of physical condition, scholars soon realized that the classification of the language of the texts, and the determination of their provenance, were complex matters. One could not simply call these texts Aramaic without objection, nor claim that they had been imported from another place. The language question remains complicated until this day, although one knowledgeable in biblical Hebrew will be able to read the Deir ʿAlla texts with comprehension. Interpretations of the inscriptions have varied widely because of the difficulties in reading them and in light of the unusual vocabulary employed in them. Most of all, investigators have been challenged to relate the inscriptions from Deir

ʿAlla to the biblical texts and traditions pertaining to Balaam, a subject of considerable complexity in its own right.

Hoftijzer defined two principal groups of plaster inscriptions, which he called Combination I and Combination II, respectively. Neither he nor those who came after him have yet been able to make any sense at all of what follows after line 17 of Combination II, in what appear to be lines 18–37. There is also an inventory of numerous fragments, some of which have been inserted in lacunae, while others remain unassigned. These are registered by Hoftijer as Combinations III–XII, and according to Fragments in each Combination. The placement of such fragments has been of great help in restoring the texts, as a whole, and a great debt is owed to E. Puech (1987) for his efforts in this regard. Balaam's name appears only in Combination I, which is undoubtedly one of the reasons it has received the most scholarly attention. As will be shown, however, both Combinations are undoubtedly part of the same collection, entitled in the first line of Combination I: *ysry blʿm brbʾr, ʾš ḥzh ʾlhn hʾ* "The misfortunes of Balaam, the son of Beor; a divine seer is he." The relationship of the two Combinations will be discussed further in these Comments. There are also indications that additional columns may have been inscribed.

The words of Balaam, the son of Beor, were displayed in a building that was part of a complex of structures standing in the Valley of Sukkoth not far from the land of the Ammonites and Moabites during the preexilic biblical period. This was prior to the Assyrian campaigns in Transjordan of the third quarter of the eighth century B.C.E. Combination I tells us that the Transjordanian Balaam experienced visions and uttered orations about the future, and enacted roles not dissimilar from those attributed to the biblical Balaam. It is obvious, therefore, that Combination I of the Deir ʿAlla inscription is relevant in a highly significant way to the proper understanding of the biblical orations of Balaam, and to the narratives of the *Bileamsage*. There are also significant affinities of diction and literary expression between other biblical texts and both of the Combinations.

Here we will present an edition of Combination I in transcription and translation, and a series of Excerpts from Combination II, consisting of those passages, contained in approximately the first half of the Combination, that are sufficiently legible. Both Combinations will be accompanied by Notes. The Deir ʿAlla inscriptions feature poetic parallelism, and could be viewed either as heightened prose or as adapted poetry. From a literary point of view, they reflect a high level of culture, and at points attain great beauty of expression. Accordingly, the transcription will be plotted in a format intended to highlight the literary character of the texts, as well as to set off speeches and other demarcations within them. In Notes to Combination II, references will be to the Excerpts, which are lettered {a}, {b} and so forth. For convenience, a new system of delineation will be employed, a practice likewise adopted by a number of other scholars. Following upon these presentations, an interpretation of the Deir ʿAlla texts will be undertaken so as to provide a basis for their integration within the Numbers commentary. A similar though not identical edition of the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions by the author of the present commentary has appeared in *Qadmoniot* (Levine 1995a, Hebrew) and an English translation and a brief commentary is to be found in *Scripture in Context, Volume II* (Levine 1998a). These renditions all go back to the first study of the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions by the author of this commentary in 1984. The affinities to biblical literature exhibited by the Deir ʿAlla texts are endemic to their proper interpretation, and it would be counterproductive to explore their overall relevance to the biblical sources without first drawing some conclusions as to their content and meaning, lest we end up comparing one unknown to another.

Combination I: An Outline

Combination I begins with the identification of Balaam and his title: He is a divine seer. The texts to follow are his predictions of misfortune. Balaam reports to his clan and to community leaders on his nocturnal visitation by the gods, who communicate to him an utterance of El. There follows a rhetorical dialogue between Balaam and those who have come to see him from among his people, and Balaam bids them hear what has been disclosed to him. Balaam discloses that some gods (*ʾlhn*) and Shadday-gods (*šdyn*) have banded together, have convened a council (*mwʿd*) and issued a decree against a goddess named Shagar, known by her full name as Shagar-and-Ishtar (*šgr wʿštr*). The full name appears later on in Combination I.

Balaam then repeats the words that the gods and Shadday-gods had spoken to Shagar-and-Ishtar. She was ordered to produce celestial darkness by covering the heavens with dense clouds, and was told never to raise her voice again. We are not informed of the reason for the decree of the sinister council, but the fact that the goddess is ordered to maintain her silence implies that she had been rebellious or disrespectful in some way. Syro-Mesopotamian myths about the goddess Ishtar suggest that this goddess was often unruly. In effect, Balaam proceeds to interpret this celestial omen, as he depicts what it signals, portraying what will occur on earth. There will be desolation, with birds shrieking wildly, and grazing lands will be abandoned to wild beasts, who will feed in them freely. Exactly what situation is being projected in reality, whether a natural disaster or devastation at the hands of man, is unclear. At this point, the interpretation of the text becomes very uncertain. The reading adopted here sees Balaam as undertaking the rescue of the goddess Shagar-and-Ishtar from the edict of the divine council, mainly by oracular and exorcist measures, so that she would not be compelled to produce celestial darkness. It is to be assumed that such was his mission on behalf of El and the benevolent gods.

This is another way of saying that the land and people, who remain unidentified, would be saved from desolation. We assume that Combination I is referring to the Jordan Valley, the area around Deir ʿAlla itself.

The speaker, who is understood to be Balaam, admonishes the adversaries of the goddess, and orders that Shagar-and-Ishtar be taken to several kinds of magical practitioners who will work their charms and pronounce their spells and use their unguents and potions, ultimately freeing the goddess from the edict imposed upon her. The adversaries heard incantations from afar, and, by the present interpretation, released the goddess. We then encounter the beginning of a statement, that reads: *šgr wʿštr* "Shagar-and-Ishtar did not/was not-." What follows is broken, but it is probable that the text continued at least several lines further. According to the present interpretation, they would have stated that the goddess did not cover the heavens with dense clouds, meaning that Balaam had saved his people and his land.

The last line, line 43, marks the beginning of a new section, stating that "he saw-" something, which we take to mean that Balaam beheld an additional vision.

Transcription

1. ysry [.] spr. blʿm . b[rbʿ]r. ʾš. ḥzh. ʾlhn. hʾ[.]
2. wyʾtw.$^{\text{ʾlwh}}$.ʾlhn. blylh[.w]yḥz. mḥzh. kmśʾ.ʾl.
3. wyʾmrw lb[lʿ]m. brbʿr.
4. kh. ypʿl blʾ.ʾḥrʾh.
5. ʾš. lr[ʾ]h. mh. šmʿt.
6. wyqm. blʿm. mn. mḥr. hn [———]lt.
7. yzmn. r[ʾšy qhl[.ʾ]lwh.
8. wlym[yn. yṣ]m. wbkh. ybkh.
9. wyʿl. ʿmh. ʾlwh. wyʾm[rw.] lblʿm. brbʿr.
10. lm. tṣm. wlm. tbkh
11. wyʾmr lhm.
12. šbw.ʾḥwkm. mh. šdyn. ḥ[sbw.]
13. wlkw. rʾw. pʿlt. ʾlhn.
14. ʾl[h]n. ʾtyḥdw. wnṣbw. šdyn. mwʿd.
15. wʾmrw. lš[gr.
16. tpry. skry .šmyn. bʿb.
17. ky. šm. ḥsk. wʾl. ngh. ʿṭm. wʾl. smr
18. ky. thby. ḥtt[. bʿ]b. ḥšk.
19. wʾl. thgy. ʿd. ʿlm.
20. ky ssʿgr. ḥrpt. nšr.
21. wqn[.] rḥmn. yʿnh.
22. ḥ[sdh.] bny. nṣṣ. wṣdh.

23. ʾprḥy. ʾnph. drr. nšrt.
24. ywn. wṣpr[. ʿp bš]myn
25. w[yḥsl. b]qr.mṭh. bʾšr. rḥln. yybl. ḥtr.
26. ʾrnbn. ʾklw. yḥd.
27. ḥpš[y.—]m[.] ḥyt[. śd]h
28. w[—]n. štyw. ḥmr. wqbʿn.
29. šmʿw. mwsr. gry . š[gr. wʿštr]
30. [ḥ]km.
31. lḥkmn. yqḥk. wʿnyh rqḥt. mr. wkhnh.
32. [ ] mtpgr.[. . .] wb[šm]n. yzt. yt[mšḥ]
33. lnśʾ.ʾzr. qrn. ḥšb. ḥšb. wḥšb.
34. ḥ[šb]. ʾtntq. mn[.] ḥbr[wh.]
35. [w]ḥbṣn. hlkw. bt[. . .]
36. wšmʿw ḥršn. mn. rḥq[.]
37. [ ]
38. w[y]ptḥ. lḥly. d[. . .] wkl.ḥzw.qqn.
39. šgr. wʿštr. l[
40. [ ] nmr. ḥnyṣ.
41. hqrqt.bn [
42. [ ] mšn ʾzrn.
43. wʿyn

Translation

1. The misfortunes of the book of Balaam, the son of Beor; a divine seer is he.

2. Then the gods came $^{\text{to him}}$ at night, and he beheld a vision in accordance with El's utterance.

3. They said to Balaam, son of Beor:
4. "So will be done, with naught surviving;
5. "No one has seen [the likes of] what you have heard!"
6. Balaam arose on the morrow, behold [
7. He summoned *the heads of the assembly* unto him,
8. And for two days he fasted, and wept bitterly.

9. Then his intimates entered into his presence, and they said to Balaam, the son of Beor:

10. "Why do you fast, and why do you weep?"
11. Then he said to them:
12. "Be seated, and I will tell you what the Shadday-gods have planned,
13. "And go, see the acts of the gods!

14. "The gods have banded together, and the Shadday-gods have established a council.

15. "And they have said to [the goddess] Shagar:
16. 'Sew up, close up the heavens with dense cloud,
17. 'That darkness exist there, not brilliance, *Obscurity and not clarity*;
18. 'So that you instill dread in dense darkness.
19. 'And—never utter a sound again!'
20. "It shall be that the swift and crane will shriek insult to the eagle,
21. "And a nest of vultures shall cry out in response.
22. "The stork, the young of the falcon and the owl,
23. "The chicks of the heron, sparrow and cluster of eagles;
24. "Pigeons and birds, [and fowl in the s]ky.
25. "And a rod shall [flay the cat]tle; where there are ewes, a staff shall be brought.
26. "Hares—eat together!
27. "Free[ly feed,]oh the beasts [of the field]!
28. "And [freely] drink, asses and hyenas!"
29. Heed the admonition, adversaries of Sha[gar-and-Ishtar]!
30. [ ] skilled diviner.
31. To skilled diviners one shall take you, and to an oracle, [to] a perfumer of myrrh and a priestess.
32. [Who] *covers his body* [with oil], *and rubs himself with olive oil.*
33. To one bearing an offering in a horn; one augurer after another, and yet another.
34. One augurer broke away *from his colleagues*;
35. And the striking force departed [
36. And they heard incantations from afar.
37. [ ]
38. Then disease was unleashed [ ], and all beheld acts of distress.
39. Shagar-and-Ishtar did not [
40. The piglet [drove out] the leopard;
41. And the [ ] drove out the young of [the].
42. [ ] double offerings.
43. And he beheld—

Notes

Line 1:

The reading *ysry* is by Puech (1987), who translates "admonitions of-," But the sense of forewarning is expressed by the form *mwsr* "admonition" in line 29. More likely, *ysry* is similar to Late Hebrew *yissûr*, a Piel-based noun meaning "suffering, discipline," more precisely the pain that comes as a consequence of wrongdoing. This form derives from the same root as *mwsr*, and reflects the sense of the Piel, *yissar*, in biblical Hebrew (1 Kings 12:11, 14, Ps 39:12). What the caption announces is that the text to follow records misfortunes that were foretold by Balaam, the son of Beor. Weippert (1991) has some interesting comments on usage of the term *sēper* in the titles of biblical collections, especially prophetic and wisdom works. In the Hebrew Bible, we find a prophetic book, entitled *sēper Naḥûm* "the book of Nahum."

As J. Naveh (1979) has explained, typically Aramaic *br*, instead of Hebrew-Canaanite *bn*, occurs only in the name of Balaam. This occurrence no more makes this text Aramaic, nor Balaam an Aramean, than does the name *klmw br ḥy(ʾ)* "Kilamuwa son of Ḥayya'" render a Phoenician inscription from Samʾal an Aramaic text.

Line 2:

The red ink, used in certain parts of the inscription, ends after the word *ʾlhn* (in original line 1), and its placement cannot determine the syntactic breaks in the present text. There is no good reason, therefore, to render *hʾ* as an interjection: "Behold!" and to regard it as the beginning of a new clause. G. Hamilton (as reported by J. Hackett [1980:4, note 19]), measured the extent of the red ink here, and at further points where it occurs, and determined that it simply went halfway across the line in each case. Thus, in line 2, the red ink picks up under the exact point where it ceases in line 1, and continues to the end of the line. In original line 17 of Combination II, the red ink again reaches only to the middle of the line. In fact, in line 2 the red ink begins between two words of a clause, *kh* "So" and *ypʿl* "will be done," and in line 17 of Combination II the change from red to black ink occurs between *wmlqb* "and from pronouncing curses," and *ʾmr*, "word," the actual object of the clause. We therefore read: *ʾš ḥzh ʾlhn hʾ* "A divine seer is he." Cf. *ʾîš ṣārûʿa hûʾ* "A leprous person is he" (Lev 13:44) or, even more to the point, *ʾîš hāʾelōhîm hûʾ* "The man of God is he" (1 Kings 13:26). The first-person equivalent would be *ʾîš ʿōbēd ʾadāmāh ʾānōkî* "A man who works the soil am I" (Zech 13:5). It is also relevant that Balaam, the *ḥzh* "seer," beholds a *mḥzh* "vision." In biblical Hebrew, Hebrew *maśśāʾ* "utterance, forensic vision" also serves as the direct object of the verb *ḥ-z-h* (Hab 1:1, Lament 2:14).

The spelling *ʾlwh* "to him" was written above the line. It is a variant of *ʿlwh* with *ayin*, and reflects the interplay of *ʿal* and *ʾel* in certain strata of Hebrew and Aramaic. It recurs in line 9, below. As has been noted, the statement *wyʾtw ʾlwh ʾlhn blylh* closely parallels Numbers 22:20: *wayyābōʾ ʾelōhîm ʾel Bilʿām laylāh* "Then God came to Balaam at night."

Restored from a fragment by Hamilton (*apud* Hackett 1984b), and generally accepted: *wyḥz mḥzh* "Then he beheld a vision." The term *maśśāʾ* "utterance" resonates with the idiom *nāśāʾ qôl* "to raise the voice, to speak," and designates an audible utterance, by a prophet or other spokesman, as in biblical usage (Weippert 1991). El is the presiding deity of the Deir ʿAlla texts. The gods who are his messengers transmit El's utterance to Balaam, with a statement to the effect that a terrible destruction will occur, leaving nothing in its wake; a destruction the likes of which no one has ever seen.

Lines 4–5:

Elliptical *kh ypʿl* is best translated as elliptical with stative force: "So will be done." It is generally agreed that the form *ʾḥrʾh* is adverbial, like Hebrew *hālʾāh* "beyond," but the sense is more likely to be that of subsequent time, hence "afterward, future." Together, *blʾ ʾḥrʾh* means: "without a future," which is to say that nothing and nobody will survive the disaster. Puech reads *lrʾt* "you have not seen," but the *tau* is not clearly legible, so that this word could be read *lrʾh*, in the third person, which makes better sense. In any event, the force of *ʾs* + *l(ʾ)*—(negation) is "no one." Cf. Genesis 23:6 *ʾîš mimmennû . . . lōʾ yikleh* "no one of us . . . will withhold."

Lines 7–8:

Puech (1987) explains how he elicited the reading *yzmn r[ʾšy] qhl* "He summons the heads of the assembly" by inserting certain fragments originally published and photographed by Hoftijzer, but which were not placed in the lacuna. Thus, fragment VIIId, placed after a legible *yod*, yielded *yzmn* "he convenes, summons." The Piel *zimmēn*, frequent in Late Hebrew, is denominative of *zeman* "time," an Aramaism in Koheleth 3:1, and in other late biblical texts, which attest Pual participles *mezūmmānîm, mezūmmānôt*. Thus, *ʿittîm mezūmmānôt* means "calculated times" and *zimmēn* means "to bring together at a set time." The insertion of other fragments yielded *qhl* "assembly," whereas *r[ʾšy* "heads of-" represents only a logical guess. In line 8, Puech restores *wlym[yn yṣ]m* "he fasts for two days," positing a dual form, and taking his cue from line 10, where there is reference to Balaam's weeping and fasting.

Line 9:

The reading *ʾlwh* "to him" is admittedly uncertain, but since this form is once attested clearly in line 2, and is likely in line 7, it is recommended here, in context. This would be indicated whether we take *wyʿl* from *ʿ-l-y* "to ascend," or from *ʿ-l-l* "to enter," which is decidedly preferable. Reference to Balaam's *ʿm* "clan, people" interacts with reference to the leaders of the *qhl* "assembly." The former would be members of his own clan, whereas the latter would constitute the leaders of the community. The term *ʿm* recurs in Combination II, Excerpt {i}, and its usage is collective, so that it often takes plural verbs, as is the case here.

Lines 12–13:

We accept Puech's restoration, *ḥ[šbw]* "they planned," because the *ḥeṭ* is quite legible. The Piel imperfect with pronominal suffix *'ḥwkm* "I will show you, tell you" recalls biblical usage. Cf. Job 15:17: *'aḥawkā šema' li* "I will tell you; hear me!" The text refers both to *'lhn*, whose meaning is obvious, and to *šdyn*, which is problematic. Given the orthography of the Deir 'Alla inscriptions, there are two reasonable possibilities of interpretation: (1) *šdyn* represents a dual of *šēd* "demon," noting that *šēdîm* "demons" and *'elōhîm* "gods" are parallel in Deuteronomy 32:17 (Hackett 1980:85–89); and (2) A pluralized form of *šadday*, previously unattested, which would be vocalized *šaddāyin*, on the model of the Aramaic gentilic plural *yehûdāyin (Qere)* "Judeans" in Daniel 3:12. Interestingly, the singular form Sadday, itself, may express the gentilic concept, bearing the meaning "the one of the mountain" (see Notes to Num 24:4). The hypostasis of *šadday* is suggested by several theophoric names, like *Šedē'ûr* (Num 1:5), *Ṣûrîšadday* (Num 1:6) and *'Ammîšadday* (Num 1:12). More will be said about the identity of the divine beings of the Deir 'Alla inscriptions in due course.

Line 14:

The order of divine beings is reversed here: *'lhn, šdyn*. The Ithpeel form, *'tyḥdw* means "They have banded together." The form *wnṣbw* is best taken as a Piel third person perfect with conjunctive *waw*: *wenaṣṣîbû* "They established, set up." Hebrew normally employs the Hiphil, *hiṣṣîb*, to express the same sense (Ps 41:13). The term *mw'd* "council," referring to a council of gods, is indicated by biblical *har mô'ēd* "the mountain of the [divine] council" in Isaiah 14:13, and, less precisely, but no less certainly, by *'adat 'ēl* "the divine council" in Psalm 82:1.

Lines 15–19:

The restoration *lš[gr]* "to Shagar" is crucial to our understanding of the entire text. The subsequent statements are addressed to a female, logically the goddess who is told to remain silent after carrying out certain orders of the divine council. The full name of this goddess, *Šgr w'štr*, occurs in line 39, and we restore it in line 29 as well (see further).

As first noted by Hoftijzer (1976:273), this composite divine name evokes the biblical cliche: *šegar 'alāpêkā we'ašterōt ṣō'nekā* "the issue of your herds and the fertility of your flocks" (Deut 7:13, 28:4, 18, 51, and cf. Exod 13:12). He calls attention to the Punic personal name *'bdšgr* "worshipper of Shagar" at Carthage, which attests to the hypostasis of the component *šgr* (Benz 1972:163). In contrast, the divine name *'štr* is dehypostasized here. In the inscriptions from Emar (Arnaud 1986), a late Bronze Age town on the Euphrates, divine *Ša-ag-ga-ar* is a recipient of offerings alongside the goddess Ninkur, so that this name is likely to be that of a goddess as well. The context of the Emar references is also suggestive. The principal text is number 378, which lists gods and goddesses who received offerings on a festival. It begins by referring to Dagan as "lord of cattle" (EN. *bu-[qà-ri]*), and there is also reference to "Ashtar of the stars" (^{d}*Aš-tar* mul) and to "Ishtar of the water sources" (^{d}Inanna gašan *e-ni*; Arnaud 1986:372; text 378, lines 1, *12, 39, 44).

It is admittedly surprising to find the masculine form of the name of the goddess, normal for East Semitic, here in a West Semitic inscription, but it is highly unlikely that the male aspect, Moabite and South Arabic *ʿštr*, Ugaritic *ʿṯtr* is intended here, because the terms of address are consistently feminine. As will be explained, *Šgr wʿštr* is a goddess whose composite name synthesizes an astral aspect with that of fertility on earth.

What do the gods tell the goddess to do? She is to sew up the heavens, and dam them up. In Genesis 8:2, the Niphal, *wayyissākrū* "they were dammed up," refers to the closing of the wells of the deep after the flood was over. So, the most likely conjugation here is the Qal imperative: *tiprî*, *sikrî* "sew up, dam up." On the interplay of *ʿb* "dense cloud," *ḥšk* "darkness" and *ngh* "brilliance," see 2 Samuel 22:12–13//Psalm 18:12–13, Isaiah 25:5, 60:19, Job 22:14. A syntactic observation is in place here: Some early investigators of the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions concluded that they were written in Aramaic. Probably for this reason they identified *-ky* in the word *bʿbky* (where there is no word divider), as the Aramaic feminine suffix, and have translated: "with your dense cloud," namely, the dense cloud of the goddess being addressed. They saw the same feminine suffix in two further instances. Since the language of the Deir ʿAlla texts need not be classified as Aramaic, other conclusions are possible. One sees a pattern in the formulation of the text:

Line 17: *ky šm ḥšk wʿl ngh*

Line 18: *ky thby ḥtt [bʿ]b ḥšk*

Line 20: *ky ssʿgr ḥrpt nšr*

In each case, the force of *ky* is purposeful: "So that, in order that-". This seems clearly to be the function of *ky* in line 20, where this particle begins a clause, and is actually preceded by a word divider (cf. Puech 1987:21, number 36). Hoftijzer (1976:248) notes that *ky* comes at the beginning of Combination II, original line 19, hardly the place for a feminine suffix.

The parallel hemistichs express opposites: (1) *ḥšk* "darkness and not *ngh* "brilliance," and (2) *ʿṭm wʾl smr*. Puech accepts these readings, whose meanings are not entirely clear, however. The word *smr*, if correct, may be cognate with Hebrew-Aramaic *s-m-r* (variant: *ṣ-m-r*) "to bristle, stand up like hairs, nails" (Ps 119:20, Job 4:15, and in Late Hebrew and Aramaic). The visible features of celestial bodies may be referred to as "bristling." Thus, Akkadian *zappu* (CAD Z:49–50) "the Bristle" describes the Pleiades. The reading *ʿṭm,* which Puech accepts as certain, is probably the metathesis of Aramaic-Syriac *ʿmṭ* (variant: *ḥmṭ*), as first suggested verbally by J. C. Greenfield, namely: "darkness, obscurity, cloud" (Puech 1987:22, n. 39, Hoftijzer 1991, and see Levy 1963, III:661, s.v. *ʿmṭ*). The goddess is instructed to place *ḥtt* "dread" in the midst of the darkness. Cf. Hebrew *ḥāt* "dread" (Gen 9:2, Job 41:25) and *ḥittāh* in Genesis 35:5, as well as *ḥittît* (Ezek 32:23, passim). The synonym of Hebrew *ḥāt* is *môrāʾ* "fear" and as a parallel to *thby ḥtt* "you shall instill, place dread" compare biblical Hebrew *ʾašer nātenû ḥittîtām beʾereṣ ḥayim* "who instilled their dread in the land of the living" (Ezek 32:24–25).

The admonition to remain silent suggests, of course, that the offense of the goddess had something to do with what she had said. In biblical Hebrew usage, the verb *h-g-h* "to utter" may connote an adverse utterance (Isa 59:3, Ps 2:1, 38:13, Job 27:4). The geminate form *hagîg* "utterance" (Ps 5:2, 39:4) may be cognate with Akkadian *agāgu* "to be angry" (CAD A, I:139, and see Weippert 1991).

Lines 20–24:

This section describes a disaster of some sort, either natural or one brought about by war and invasion. It contains perhaps the longest list of birds, mostly birds of prey, in any West Semitic text, with a total of twelve birds, if we count *ʿp* "fowl." The only lists with more names are those of forbidden fowl in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, where there are as many as twenty birds registered. The word written *ssʿgr* is to be divided and taken as referring to two birds: *ss* (Hebrew *sûs* or *sîs*) "swift" and *ʿgr* (Hebrew *ʿāgûr*) "crane," as in Isaiah 38:14. Consequently, *ḥrpt* "revile, shriek" (Ps 119:42, Prov 27:11) is to be taken as a participle feminine plural. These two birds are known for their shrill sounds in flight (Isa 38:14, Jer 8:7). What we have is the interplay of *ḥ-r-p* "to shriek" and *ʿ-n-h* "to respond," as in the biblical passages just cited.

The rest of the birds mentioned here are identifiable, and many are listed as prohibited food in the dietary laws of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. We find two kinds of eagles: *nšr* (= Hebrew *nešer*) "eagle, griffin, vulture" and *rḥm* (= Hebrew *raḥam*) "Egyptian vulture." These birds eat carrion. There is reference to *nṣṣ* (= Hebrew *nēṣ*) "sparrow hawk," a type of falcon, and *ṣdh* "owl," a bird listed in the Aramaic treaty from Sefire (Gibson 1975:30, s.v. Sefire 1A, line 33). The context there is not dissimilar from that of the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions, since we read of wild animals and fowl and even snakes and scorpions being unleashed in the pasturelands of the violators of the treaty. The reference to *ʾprḥy ʾnph* (= Hebrew *ʾanāpāh*) "heron," and restored *ḥ[sdh]* (= Hebrew *ḥaṣîdāh*) "stork," are marsh or sea birds. Deir ʿAlla *drr* (= Hebrew *derôr*) means "sparrow" (*HALAT*:221, s.v. *derôr* III). We translate *nšrt* "cluster of eagles." Puech's restoration *[ʿp. bš]myn* "bird in the sky" is persuasive.

Lines 25–28:

Following upon the description of birds shrieking and flying around wildly, the scene changes to animals. The parallelism of *mṭh* "staff" and *ḥṭr* "rod" defines line 25. The latter stich is legible, and states that the flocks were beaten, so that the former stich would logically refer to beating the herds. Puech (1987:23) reads: *w[yhšl.b]qr mṭh*, based on the occurrence of the verb *ḥ-š-l* "to flay, peel off" in a fragment, IX k, which, however, belongs elsewhere. That fragment reads: *bqr. lḥšl. wyʾkl* "Let him flay cattle and eat." The verb *ḥ-š-l* is once attested in biblical Hebrew in the Niphal, *hanneḥešālîm ʾaḥarêkā* "those who are lagging, detached in your rear ranks" (Deut 25:18). A cognate verb, Akkadian *ḫašālu*, is most often used to describe the hulling of grain (*CAD Ḫ*:137–138).

What is being described is the abandonment of pastureland to wild beasts. Hares are given leave to feed together, beasts of the field to take prey, and asses and hyenas (Hebrew *ṣebô ʿa*) to drink "freely," Hebrew *ḥopšî*. What the asses and hyenas are to drink is missing, as is the precise activity of the beasts of the field, presumably feeding.

Line 29:

Here begins a new section of the text, in which the enemies of Shagar-and-Ishtar, the council of gods and Shadday-gods, are admonished. The speaker is undoubtedly Balaam, who, after transmitting the vision of misfortune, turns to those who would punish the goddess, and begins his efforts to free her from the edict of the council. Hebrew diction attests the idiom *šemaʿ mûsār* "Heed admonition" (Prov 1:8). As Hoftijzer (1976:209–210) suggested, *gry š[gr wʿštr]* is best understood as "adversaries of Shagar-and-Ishtar," a sense derived from the root *g-r-h* "to incite" (the Piel *gērāh* occurs in Prov 15:18), and is cognate with the Akkadian noun *gērû* (Assyrian *gārû*) "enemy" (*CAD* G:62–63).

The word *ḥkm* "skilled diviner" is legible at the end of line 30, and it is followed in line 31 by mention of three additional magical practitioners. The elliptical form *yqḥk* derives from the verb *l-q-ḥ* "to take," which recurs in Combination II, Excerpt {g}. It is best translated as elliptical "One shall take you," reference being to the goddess Shagar-and-Ishtar. She is to be taken to *ḥkmn* "skilled diviners." In Isaiah 3:3 *ḥakam ḥarāšîm* means "one skilled in incantations," synonymous with *nebôn laḥaš* "one expert in spells." In Genesis 41:8, *ḥakāmîm* is synonymous with *mekaššepîm* "sorcerers," in Exodus 7:11, it is synonymous with *ḥarṭummîm* "magicians" (cf. Isa 19:11). This meaning for *ḥkmn* is all the more significant because *ḥršn* "incantations" occurs further on in line 36. The goddess is also taken to a priestess (*khnh*), and to a perfumer of myrrh (*rqḥt mr*; cf. 1 Sam 8:13), and, interestingly, to a female practitioner called *ʿnyh*, literally "answerer," namely, an oracle. Hoftijzer (1976:212, notes 79–82) refers to Akkadian *āpiltu*, masculine *āpilu* "answerer, oracle," a function known at Mari. Akkadian *apālu*, "to answer" is semantically equivalent with Hebrew *ʿ-n-h* (*CAD* A II:155 f. s.v. *apālu* A, especially meaning 2, and 170, s.v. *āpilu*). In biblical usage, *maʿaneh ʾelōhîm* in Micah 3:7 means "a divine response" (cf. 1 Kings 18:24, Prov 16:1).

Lines 32–36:

The only line within this passage that is clearly understandable is line 36, where we read that these magical practitioners heard incantations from afar, and, we may assume, were affected by them. Although rare in biblical Hebrew, except for its occurrence in Isaiah 3:3, the root *ḥ-r-š* "to pronounce an incantation, cast a spell," and related nominal forms, are quite frequent in Aramaic. See Levy 1963, II:119 s.v. *ḥaraš* and *ḥaršāʾ*. Possibly compare Akkadian *ḫarāšu* A, meaning 2, in *CAD Ḫ*:95.

Line 33 is legible, but not definitely understandable. It is of two parts. The former part speaks of one who "bears" (participial *nśʾ*) an offering in a horn (*qrn*). Deir ʿAlla *ʾzr* is best taken as a cognate of Ugaritic *uzr* "offering" (*KTU*$_2$ 1. 17, lines 2–3, passim, in the Aqhat epic). In the latter part of the line, the word *ḥšb* is repeated three times: *ḥšb, ḥšb, wḥšb*. Hebrew *ḥōšēb* may designate a type of magical practitioner, perhaps an augurer, one who "calculates" omens. The repetitious sequence of three may be distributive, namely, "auguerers of all sorts."

Beyond these observations, we can only conjecture about what lines 32–36 are talking about. Line 32 seems to be describing what one practitioner does: He rubs his body, and anoints himself with olive oil, if Puech's reading, based on the placement of fragments, is accepted. The form *mtpgr* is a bit strange; it is either a Hithpael participle or the Aramaistic Ithpeel. In any event, it would be denominative of *pgr*, Hebrew *peger*, Akkadian *pagru* "body." Hence: "he covers, rubs his body," parallel with *ytmšḥ* "he anoints himself with oil." It would seem that one *ḥšb* "augurer" separated himself from his fellows; why we don't know. The form *ʾtntq* would once again be the Aramaistic Ithpeel of *n-t-q*, "to be detached, separate one's self." In line 35, the reading *ḥbṣn* is explained by Puech (1987), who generated this reading by inserting fragment Vd, as deriving from Aramaic-Syriac *ḥ-b-ṣ*, a variant of *ḥ-b-t* "to strike, mill, crush," often used in connection with churning milk to make cheese, or crushing dates (Levy 1963, II:7, s.v. *ḥabaṣ*; Greenfield 1991). Hoftijzer (1976:257–258) may have been closer to the meaning of *ḥbṣn* by citing Syriac usage of this root in the form *ḥebṣāʾ* "crowd." If these explanations are acceptable, the text is saying that some striking force or mob had departed to do its work, with the result that there was disease and distress, which, in turn, led to the freeing of the goddess. The fact that we read *wḥbṣn hlkw* "and the striking force departed" makes it more likely that the following line 36 also attests a perfect form, *wšmʿw* "and they heard," rather than an imperative: "Hear!"

Notwithstanding all of their uncertainty, lines 32–36 appear to be describing what happened as the goddess was being treated by diverse magical practitioners in the effort to free her from the edict of the divine council.

Lines 37–39:

Line 37 is blank, and it is hard to make sense of line 38. In line 38, Puech restores *wypthlḥly* [ ], literally "He opened to disease [ ]," which would explain what follows: "And all beheld acts of distress." The implication is that the magical efforts were successful. Deir ʿAlla *qqn*, realizing *dod* as *qoph*, is comparable with *ʿāqāh, ʿāqîn* "distress, troubles," in certain dialects of Aramaic (Sokoloff 1990:415), and with Hebrew forms like *ṣûqāh* "distress" (Isa 8:22), and masculine *ṣôq* (Dan 9:25). The reading of the goddess's name in line 39 is clear: *šgr wʿštr.* The unusual significance of this name will be discussed in the Comments on the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions, to follow. The name of the goddess is followed by the prefixed negative indicator *l-*. In other words, "Shagar-and-Ishtar did not, was not-" The implication is that what had been threatened did not happen to Shagar-and-Ishtar, or that she did not do what she had been commanded to do. Balaam had succeeded.

Lines 40–42:

The form *hqrqt* is the Hiphil, third feminine perfect singular, from *qrq,* realized as *ʿrq* "to withdraw, flee" in Hebrew and certain dialects of Aramaic. Hence: "She drove out" (Hoftijzer 1976:219–220, Hoftijzer and Jongeling 195:1035–1036, s.v. qrq_1). The sense is that with the restoration of order, domestic animals drove out the wild beasts that had invaded feeding and grazing areas. Deir ʿAlla *mšn ʾzrn* probably means "double offerings." Compare *leḥem mišneh* "double portions of bread" in Exodus 16:22, and *mišneh śekar śākîr* "double the wage of a hired worker" in Deuteronomy 15:18.

Line 43:

This line marks the beginning of a new section of the inscription. The form, *wʿyn* "And he beheld" represents a denominative from *ʿn* (= Hebrew *ʿayin*) "eye," a verb attested in Ugaritic. In biblical Hebrew we note the unique *ʿōyēn (Qere)* "he regards in an inimical manner" (1 Sam 18:9). Balaam saw an additional vision.

Combination II: An Outline

Because of the highly fragmented nature of Combination II, and because insufficient work has been done on aligning possible fragments, it would be preferable to present in close sequence those passages up to and including original line 17 whose meaning can be fathomed with some degree of reliability. Excerpt {a} relates that El, after satisfying himself with lovemaking, built a necropolis, an eternal home for the dead, *byt ʿlmn*. This "home" is described in the several lines that follow. We read that it is a home where travelers do not stay, and into which bridegrooms do not enter. (Excerpt {b} describes conditions of burial in the netherworld, where worm rot abounds. Apparently, there is reference to the absence of human passions and pressures in the netherworld. Excerpt {c} states that one who had served as a counselor will not be consulted further. Excerpt {d}, of which only one line makes clear sense, describes the bier on which the enshrouded dead lie in the netherworld. Excerpt {e} follows suit, with more descriptions of eternal rest. Excerpt {f} relates that the corpse moans in the netherworld. Excerpt {g} carries through on this theme, describing the arrival of the devastated corpse in the netherworld, where kings and dead infants are buried. This excerpt concludes with the observation that the quests of kings turn to naught. Excerpt {h} carries forward the theme of the denial of human quests. Finally, Excerpt {i} resumes the theme of Excerpt {c}, that someone who had served as a counselor would no longer be consulted. The addressee is told that because of his words he had been judged and denied the skill to pronounce effective execrations or to transmit divine utterances to his people.

The Excerpts from Combination II will be cited in the transcription according to the original lines set by Hoftijzer (1976:174). The first half of original line 17 of Combination II is written in red ink, as was the first line and a half of Combination I. As has been noted, there is no syntactic significance to the placement of the red ink, but its positioning at this point in Combination II may, indeed, be significant in establishing the relationship between Combinations I and II, indicating that they are both part of the same, larger composition. Possibly, line 17 of Combination II marked the opening of an additional inscription. In summary, Combination II, as far as we have taken it, presents a dramatic description of the netherworld. In fact, the word Sheol (*Šeʾôl*), may actually be attested at Deir ʿAlla. This description recalls the Sheol oracle of Isaiah 14, a subject to be discussed in the Comments. With all of its uncertainties, and notwithstanding its incompleteness, Combination II represents a rich addition to the Sheol literature of the ancient Near East.

Transcription

{a}
[ddn] ^{6} yrwy. ʾl.
wyʿbd ʾl. byt. ʿlmn.
by[t]

[*byt*]
[7] byt. ly‘l. hlk.
wly‘l. ḥtn. šm

{b}
[8] rmn. mn. gdš.
mn. pḥzy. bny. ’š.
wmn. šqy. [*bny. ’dm*]

{c}
[9][ ] ly.
hl‘ṣh. bk. lyt‘ṣ.
’w lmlkh. lytmlk.

{d}
[10] [m]n. mškb. mtksn. lbš. ḥd.
hn. tšn’n. y’nš.
hn. t[

{e}
[11]] ’šm[.]
[rmh.] tḥt. r’šk.
tškb. mškby. ‘lmyk.
lḥlq . l[

{f}
[12]]h blbbm
n’nḥ. nqr. blbbh.
n’nḥ [.

{g}
[13]] bt
šmh. mlkn. yḥzw [ ]
lyš. bm. yqḥ.‘l. rḥm.
w‘l [.]
[14] ‘l [.
šmh [.] kb[ ]h[.] ykn.
lbb. nqr. šhh.
ky. ’th. l [š’l]
[ ]
[15] lqṣh š[’l]’h
wzl. mgdr. ṭš[

šʾlt. mlk.ssh.
ws[ʿ]l[t].

{h}
[ ] [16] h
[ḥzn
rḥq[t.] mk. šʾltk.

{i}
[17] ldʿt. spr. dbr. lʿmh.
ʿl. lšn. lk. nšpṭ.
wmlqb. ʾmr.

Translation (Excerpts)

{a}
El satisfies himself with [lovemaking].
Then El built an eternal home.
A hou[se]
[A *house*]
A house where no traveler enters,
Nor does a bridegroom enter there.

{b}
Worm rot from a grave.
From the reckless affairs of men,
And from the lustful desires [*of humans*].

{c}
[ ] for me?
If it is for counsel, no one will consult you.
Or for his advice, no one will take counsel.

{d}
From the bed, they cover themselves with a wrap.
If you hate him, he will become mortally ill.
If you [

{e}
] punishment?
[Worm rot] is under your head.
You shall lie on your eternal bedding.
To pass away to [

{f}
] in their heart.
The corpse moans in his heart.
He moans [

{g}
] a daughter?
There, kings shall behold [ ].
He is absent (?) when Death seizes a suckling of the womb.
And a suckling [ ]
A suckling [ ]
There [ ] shall be.
The heart of the corpse is desolate
As he approaches [Sheol].
[ ].
To the edge of She[ol],
And the shadow of the hedge [*of*]
The quest of a king is moth rot.
And the quest of [

{h}
[ ] seers.
Your quest has become distant from you.

{i}
To know how to deliver a [divine] word to his people.
You have been condemned for your speech,
And [banned] from pronouncing words of execration.

Notes

Preceding Excerpt {a}, parts of three lines are legible in Combination II:

03) rn. ’kl
04) ‘lmh . rwy. ddn. k[
05) lh. šm. nqr. wmdr. kl. rṭb.[

The parallelism *’kl//rwy* “eat//be sated” (usually with drink) is attested in Jeremiah 46:10. The idiom *rwy ddn*, Hebrew *rāwāh dōdîm* “to satisfy one’s self with lovemaking” occurs in Proverbs 7:18. The object of the lovemaking may be *‘lmh*, Hebrew *‘almāh* “young woman.” In line 05 we read *nqr*, translated “corpse.” This word recurs twice, in excerpts {f} and {g}, and will be discussed in due course. Actually, a lot hinges on the proper interpretation of this term. In the same line we read *wmdr kl rṭb* "a slope entirely damp." Cf. Late Hebrew *midrôn*, Aramaic *midrā'* "slope" (Levy 1963, III:33, s.v. *midrā'* and *midrôn*). This undoubtedly relates to the descriptions of the grave later on in Combination II.

Excerpt {a}:

El constructs a necropolis. Deir 'Alla *byt 'lmn* recalls Hebrew *bêt 'ōlāmô* "his eternal home," namely, his burial place, in Koheleth 12:5. This terminology is frequently attested in postbiblical Jewish literature (Levy 1963, I:224–228, especially 227, s.v. *bêt 'ālam*; Sokoloff 1990:95). This may be its first historical occurrence, assuming Kohelet to be a product of the late Persian or Hellenistic period. Hoftijzer need not have concluded, however, that a plural, "cemeteries" was intended, because conceptually, it is eternity that is projected as *pluralis tantum* in the Deir 'Alla inscriptions. This is demonstrated by the plural form *mškby 'lmyk* (plural) "your eternal bedding" in Excerpt {e}.

Quite possibly, we have in this Excerpt, following upon *byt 'lmn* "necropolis, eternal home," a series of three descriptive statements, each beginning with the word *byt*. This plotting of the text was suggested by Deuteronomy 8:7–9, where five pursuant statements, following upon an initial one, describe the land of Canaan, and all begin with the word *'ereṣ* "land."

> For YHWH, your God, is bringing you to a beautiful land (*'el 'ereṣ ṭôbāh*); a land (*'ereṣ*) of flowing wadis, with artesian springs and waters of the deep gushing forth in valleys and mountains; a land (*'ereṣ*) of wheat and barley, of grapevines and fig and pomegranate trees; a land (*'ereṣ*) wherein you will not eat the bread of poverty nor lack for anything; a land (*'ereṣ*) whose rocks contain iron, and from whose mountains you can hew copper."

The same sequence occurs in a shorter version in Deuteronomy 11:11–12. The noun *hlk* "traveler," in the Hebrew form *hēlek* "traveler," occurs as a *hapax legomenon* in 1 Samuel 12:4.

Excerpt {b}:

The meaning of *gdš* as "grave" was established by Hoftijzer (1976:226) on the basis of Job 21:32, where Hebrew *gādîš* parallels *qebārôt* "graves." Also cf. Arabic *jada*^{tun} "grave." As for *pḥzy bny 'š* "the reckless affairs of men," cf. Genesis 49:4, where Hebrew *paḥaz* means "recklessness, instability." (Cf. participial *pōḥēz* "shiftless" in Judg 9:4, Zeph 3:4, as well as abstract *paḥazût* in Job 23:32; Greenfield 1978). In the netherworld one is without human emotions, which is the force of prepositional *min* "from," as if to say that the corpse is released from the passions of life. It is logical, but admittedly speculative, to restore the parallel hemistich in the same vein. Psalm 147:10 has *šôqê hāʾîš* "the lustful desires of man," related to Hebrew *tešûqāh* "desire" (Gen 3:16, 4:7, Song of Songs 7:11).

Excerpt {c}:

The meaning of the parallelism *ʿṣh/mlk* "counsel//advice" is clear enough. The one being addressed is told that he has been denied his powers as an advisor. A similar theme will recur in Excerpt {i}. In Late Hebrew, the Niphal *nimlak b-*, like the Aramaistic Ithpeel occurring here, *ytmlk b-*, means "to take counsel with" (Levy 1963, III:128–130, s.v. *mālak, melak*; Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995:634, s.v. *mlk*$_2$; Sokoloff 1990:310, s.v. *mlk 2#*). The force of the prefixed *lamed* is negative: People will not take counsel with the one being addressed here. This could be taken as a reference to Balaam.

Excerpt {d}:

The description of the netherworld continues, although only limited meaning can be derived from this excerpt. Instead of *mšgb* (thus Caquot-Lemaire 1977), we suggest reading *mškb* "bed, bedding." The *gamel* was uncertain in any case, and forms of the verb *š-k-b* recur in Combination II (see Excerpt {e}). Consonantal *mtksn* is the Hithpael participle, masculine plural: "They cover themselves." The translation of the rest of Excerpt {d} is, of course, highly conjectural. In biblical Hebrew, the verb *ʾ-n-š* means "to be mortally ill," whereas Deir ʿAlla *š-n-ʾ* suggests Hebrew *š-n-ʾ* "to hate." The two statements would seem to be conditional: "If (*hn*) you hate him, he will become mortally ill." If you [(statement incomplete)].

Excerpt {e}:

We restore *[rmh] tḥt rʾšk* "Worm rot is under your head," resonating with Excerpt {b}: *rmh mn gdš* "Worm rot from a grave." The pluralized *mškby* is best rendered abstractly: "bedding," or the like. Cf. Genesis 49:4, where *miškebê ʾābîkā* "your father's bedding" parallels *yeṣûʿî* "my bedstead." The form *lḥlq* allows of several readings; perhaps to be preferred is the infinitive construct with prefixed *lamed*. In addition to *ḥ-l-q* "to split, divide," biblical Hebrew attests another *ḥ-l-q*, cognate with Akkadian *ḫalāqu*, Ugaritic *ḥlq* "to pass away, die," which fits the present context (Levine 1995).

Excerpt {f}:

This Excerpt speaks of the corpse (*nqr*) in the netherworld. It is the corpse who moans and is desolate. The word *nqr* has not usually been interpreted in this way, however, and it is necessary to explain the basis for the translation given here, because a lot hinges on this key term. Caquot-Lemaire (1977) relate *nqr* to Hebrew *nēṣer* "shoot, descendant" (Isa 11:1, 60:21), and interpret the relevant passages to refer to a child or scion of a family. It is more likely, however, that Deir ʿAlla is cognate with homonymous *nēṣer* in Isaiah 14:19: *kenēṣer nitʿāb* "like loathsome carrion," parallel with *kepeger mûbās* "like a trampled corpse." A note in NJPS refers the reader to Late Hebrew *nēṣel* "putrifying flesh, or blood." The *qoph* of the Deir ʿAlla language reflects proto-Semitic *ḍod,* which in Hebrew is realized as a *ṣade.* We should posit two vocables: (1) *nēṣer* I "offshoot," cognate with Arabic *naḍara* "to be verdant, shine, grow," and (2) *nēṣer* II "carrion, dead flesh," cognate with the Arabic verb *naḍala* "to pull back, tear off," as is said of "drawing a sword or selecting an arrow from the quiver"; "to extract" (Ibn Manzur 1956, II:663, s.v. *Naḍala,* Stem V). Thus, *tanaḍḍala* means "[to remove] a sword from its scabbard," and the same meaning is attested for the dialectal variant *itanaṣṣala.* Stem V also has the extended connotation "to get out of something," as to get out of a sin or evil deed (M. Carter 1984, personal communication). The Late Hebrew form *nēṣel,* also written *nāṣāl* (Mishnah, *Nāzîr* 7:2, also *Ahîlôt* 2:1) occurs in a clear context:

> Over which forms of impurity is the Nazirite required to shave (Num 6:8f.)? Over a corpse, over the equivalent of an olive from a corpse, over the equivalent of an olive of *nēṣel,* and over a large, ladle-full of bloodied soil."

By way of explanation, the law of Numbers 6 provides that a Nazirite who accidentally comes into contact with a corpse during the period of his vow must begin the process all over again. The substance required to interrupt the votive period need not be an actual corpse or a part thereof, but even a minimum amount of *nēṣel* or bloodied soil has the same effect. The Talmud of Jerusalem ad loc. *Nāzîr* 9:2 explains *nēṣel* as follows: "What is *nēṣel?* Flesh from a corpse that has become detached (Hebrew: *šennūttaq*), and [bloody] liquid that has congealed." Additional Late Hebrew forms derived from the root *n-ṣ-l* include *neṣûlāh* "refuse, what is cast off." Thus, Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, *Terûmôt* 11:13: "The waste-product (Hebrew *neṣôlet*) of rotten parts of priestly gifts." Biblical Hebrew probably attests an additional form of *n-ṣ-l* "to be detached," the same root as is expressed by *nēṣer* of Isaiah 14:19. Thus, Isaiah 49:6:

> Is it of so little import that you act as my servant, to reconstitute the tribes of Israel, and to bring back the cast-offs (*ûnneṣîre [Qere: ûneṣûre]*) of Israel?

Hebrew *neṣîrê/neṣûrê* in Isaiah 49:6 has usually been derived from *n-ṣ-r* "to guard," and, accordingly, this verse has been interpreted to refer to prisoners and captives. But perhaps, as has been suggested, the verse refers to deportees, the underlying connotation being detachment, a theme that runs through Hebrew usage of *nēṣer/nēṣel* II and its Arabic cognates. This is strongly suggested by the immediate context: Israel is addressed *libzōh nepeš, limtōʿāb* (Masoretic *limtārʿēb gôy* "to the despised one, to the abhorred nation." Here, the castoff is characterized as *metōʿāb,* whereas in Isaiah 14:19, carrion is called *nitʿāb.* In the Comments to the Deir ʿAlla texts the overall affinities between Combination II of the Deir ʿAlla texts and Isaiah 14 will be explored. The term *nēṣer* is a key link in this relationship.

Excerpt {g}:

Alternatively, one could translate: "There they behold kings [ ]." Reference to kings, in any event, recalls Isaiah 14:9, 18, yet another link to the biblical Sheol oracle. We have here, in addition, a reference to infant mortality. Following Hoftijzer (1976:238–239), we take *bm yqḥ* as equivalent to Hebrew *bemô yiqqaḥ* "when he seizes," the object seized being *ʿl rḥm* "a suckling from the womb," (or possibly: "the suckling of a young woman," like Hebrew *raḥam* "nubile, young woman" in Judg 5: 30). Note the pattern of consecutive statements beginning with *ʿûl* (Hebrew *ʿûl*—Isa 49:15, 65:20) "suckling." This is similar to the sequence in Excerpt {a}, where there was a series of statements beginning with *byt* "house." Read *l* + *yš,* the negation of existence or presence, to which compare Hebrew *lōʾ yēš* (Job 9:37), and idiomatic Aramaic *lāʾ ʾîtay* "there is not."

The corpse (*nqr*) is desolate. The verb *š-h-h* is best taken as a variant of *š-ʾ-h* "to lie waste, be desolate," as expressive of emotion (Isa 6:11, Neh 1:5). On the strength of Excerpt {h}, where we suggest reading *lqṣh š[ʾl]* "to the edge of Sheol," here we restore *ky ʾth l[šʾl]* "as he approaches Sheol." The corpse is desolate as it approaches the area of the fence, or hedge (*mgdr*) around Sheol. The Excerpt continues to make reference to kings in the netherworld, where all of their quests come to naught. The word *šʾlt* "quest" (cf. 1 Sam 1:17) is repeated in the following statement, and again in Excerpt {h}. The word *ssh* could mean "his horse," but more likely it is a feminine form, cognate with Hebrew *sās* "moth," parallel with *ʿāš* "moth" in Isaiah 51:8.

Excerpt {h}:

An unpreserved line ends with reference to *ḥzn* "seers," reminiscent of the beginning of Combination I where it is said of Balaam *ʾš ḥzh ʾlhn hʾ* "A divine seer is he." The form *ḥzn* occurs in the Zakkur inscription, where this king thanks Baal Shamen for sending him messages by "seers and conjurers" (*byd ḥzn wʿddn;* Gibson 1975:8, line 12). Whoever is being addressed is told that his quest has become distant from him, unattainable.

Excerpt {i}:

The sense of this Excerpt is that the person being addressed is denied his powers. He will lack the skill to communicate a divine utterance (*dbr-* cf. Jer 18:18) to his folk. And, in addition, he will not be able to pronounce execrations. This is the sense of *wmlqb ʾmr* "and from pronouncing words of execration." This recalls the Hebrew verb *q-b-b* "to curse" occurring repeatedly in the biblical Balaam narratives. Then, too, Balaam is, in the words of the biblical poet, *šōmēʿa ʾimrê ʾēl* "one who hears El's words" (Num 24:4, 16). Intervening is the key statement suggesting the denial of special powers. The idiom *ʾl lšn* uses prepositional *ʿal* to mean "on account of" (Jer 6:19, 9:11, Amos 1:3). The person being addressed has been judged, convicted and punished. Once again, this could be a reference to Balaam.

COMMENT 6: THE BALAAM INSCRIPTIONS FROM DEIR ʿALLA: *SITZ-IM-LEBEN* AND THEMATIC INTERPRETATION

The Archaeological Context

The excavations at Deir ʿAlla that yielded the Balaam texts in 1967 were resumed in 1976 by a joint Dutch-Jordanian expedition, under G. van der Kooij and M. Ibrahim, and have continued with interruptions over the years. The stratum originally called Phase M, in which the plaster texts were found, was subsequently renamed Level IX, and considerable work was accomplished in that level in 1984 and 1987 (G. van der Kooij and M. Ibrahim 1989). Subsequent study of remains and finds has clarified the character of Level IX more precisely. There is little in the way of cultic material in the complex of small rooms in Level IX at Deir ʿAlla to qualify it as "religious space," to use van der Kooij's terminology. More likely, these roofed rooms served for trade, redistribution and the manufacture of household crafts. Van der Kooij suggests that Deir ʿAlla served as a regional craft center. It is probably unwarranted, therefore, to speak of a sanctuary in Level IX of Deir ʿAlla, whose buildings were destroyed suddenly in an earthquake.

The local population engaged in irrigated agriculture and in pastoral pursuits over centuries. This mixed pattern seems to correspond with what is known of the history of the general area of the lower central Jordan Valley, near the Jabbok/Zerqa river. Deir ʿAlla was destroyed in the late Bronze Period, and was was resettled in the late Iron I Period (middle of the twelfth to eleventh centuries B.C.E.). The immediate area was inhabited continuously through most of the Iron II Period (tenth to seventh centuries B.C.E.) until its destruction in the late eighth century B.C.E. It was later resettled, once again by Ammonites. The assemblage of pottery shows varying types for Level IX period, and for subsequent periods, as well, including imports from the Phoenician coast. Van der Kooij (1991:26) observes that "no specific evidence is available to postulate a close contact with the Aramaic culture at Damascus or Hama, except for the short inscriptions on stone and jar classified as Aramaic." Given the difficulty in establishing a precise date for Level IX, a period in the ninth and eighth centuries would be reasonable. The beginnings of Level IX antedate Assyrian cultural influence, and its conclusion predates the Ammonite characteristics evident in Deir ʿAlla, Phase VI, which is dated anywhere from the end of the eighth century B.C.E. to the mid-seventh century. Carbon 14 tests point to a date at the end of the ninth century B.C.E., give or take, for Level IX at Deir ʿAlla. We would not be amiss in assigning the inscribing of the plaster texts on the inner walls to about the turn of the century, ca. 800, or a bit later. The paleographic findings of both Puech (1991) and of van der Kooij (1991) correlate with this general time frame, although there are still disagreements as to whether the Deir ʿAlla script follows Aramaic or Ammonite patterns. As a general rule, palaeographic analysis of the Deir ʿAlla script has taken its cue from carbon 14 testing, and the earlier proposals of a late eighth to seventh century B.C.E. date for the inscriptions have been largely abandoned.

The Demographic and Historical Context

Historically, the primary question regarding the Balaam texts from Deir ʿAlla is their authorship. For whom do they speak? The Assyrian campaigns, carried out between 734 and 721 B.C.E., must be regarded as a watershed, because in their wake the demography of Gilead and of all of Transjordan changed radically. As has been shown by H. Tadmor (1982), the forces of Tiglath-Pileser III reached all the way south to Moab, and there were mass deportations from Gilead and Galilee. Before the Assyrian campaigns, the population of central Transjordan had been predominantly Israelite, whereas after the extensive Assyrian deportations, few Israelites were left. Sometime later, certainly by the mid-seventh century, Ammonites penetrated the area of the Valley of Sukkoth, as we know from the so-called Heshbon pottery found in Level VI at Deir ʿAlla. Since it has become clear that Level IX at Deir ʿAlla considerably antedates the Assyrian deportations, Israelite authorship of the Balaam texts becomes a more reasonable possibility on demographic grounds. There are, of course, other factors to be considered, to which attention will be given in due course.

In the Comments to Numbers 21, the extra-biblical evidence for Israelite settlement of North Moab was outlined. Focusing here on the immediate area of Deir ʿAlla, we note that soon after the breakup of the United Monarchy, Jeroboam I fortified Penuel, in the Valley of Sukkoth (1 Kings 12:25). Early in the last quarter of the tenth century B.C.E., Shishak's expedition came through the Valley of Sukkoth, and his stela at Karnak, restored by B. Mazar (1974), mentions six sites in the area: Adam, Kadesh, Penuel, Sukkoth, Mahanaim and Zaphon. Whether Deir ʿAlla is indeed ancient Sukkoth or another nearby mound is uncertain, and actually of minor importance. The Valley of Sukkoth, which had been unusually fertile and well populated, never fully recovered from the effects of Shishak's campaign. Although there is as yet no evidence of a Shishak destruction level at Deir ʿAlla, there is at Nimrin (most likely *Bêt Nimrāh* of Num 32:3, 36, Jos 13:27), south of Deir ʿAlla, on the way to Jericho and the Dead Sea.

Aramean expansion, beginning in the early ninth century B.C.E. under Ben-Haddad II and continuing until the end of the century under Hazael, encompassed all of Gilead. There were, however, periods of Israelite reassertion under Joash and Jeroboam II. Following their reigns, there was apparently a temporary resurgence of Aramean power, which did not last very long, however. The fact is that as many as four subsequent kings of Northern Israel were Transjordanians. According to 2 Kings 15:25, Pekah son of Remaliah was a Gileadite, and was assisted in coming to power by leading Gileadites. As his patronymic indicates, Menahem son of Gadi (namely, one of the tribe that inhabited North Moab) was a Transjordanian, which would make his son, Pekahiah, the same (2 Kings 15:14–17, 23). Most likely, Shallum son of Jabesh (2 Kings 15:13) hailed from Jabesh Gilead. Thus, from 748/47 to 733/32, Northern Israel was ruled by Transjordanian Israelites. So, during part of the period when the Balaam inscriptions were displayed on inner walls of a building at Deir ʿAlla, namely, from the early eighth century B.C.E. to the Assyrian campaigns that began in 734 B.C.E., Israelites were well settled in the immediate region, even though there were shifts from northern Israelite to Aramaean jurisdiction.

The Linguistic Character of the Texts

Great effort has gone into classifying the language of the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions. Calling this language Aramaic allows one to speculate that the inscriptions were not written in central Transjordan, but rather in Syria, or that they speak for an Aramaic culture, thereby lending reality to Balaam's statement in the first biblical Balaam poem that he was summoned from Aram (Num 23:7). It must be emphasized, therefore, that nothing in the Deir ʿAlla language actually indicates that the Balaam texts are culturally remote from the region in which they were found, even if one would opt to classify the language of the texts as some form of Aramaic, or "on the way to becoming Aramaic," as Weippert (1991) states the matter. In Level IX at Deir ʿAlla four brief Aramaic inscriptions on objects were found. Thus, on a clay jar we read: *zy šrʿ* "belonging to X," attesting the unmistakable Aramaic relative, *zy*. Originally, both H. Franken, the archaeologist, and J. Hoftijzer, the commentator, assumed a direct connection between these inscriptions and the language of the Balaam texts. This is now recognized not to be the case. As many readings in the texts were subsequently clarified, it became evident that there are relatively few distinctly Aramaic features present. For example, at the beginning of Combination I, Hoftijzer originally read: *kmly*ʾ ʾ*l* (= *kemillāyā*ʾ ʾ*ēl*) "according to these words," which would attest the Aramaic postpositive determination, *-ayyā*ʾ. As first suggested by A. Rofé (1981), and later endorsed by any number of scholars, a better reading would be: *kmś*ʾ ʾ*l* "according to the utterance of El." Once the commentator is freed from the a priori assumption that the text is Aramaic, different possibilities may be explored. Similarly, one need not read *-ky*, which occurs several times, as the feminine second person pronominal suffix suggestive of Aramaic. As was explained in Notes to Combination I, lines 17–20, the form *ky* is better taken as the particle *ky* "that, so that." The only feature of the Deir ʿAlla language that is distinctly characteristic of Old Aramaic is the realization of the phoneme ḍod as *qoph*, rather than as *ṭsade* or *ʿayin*, as in the Canaanite languages. (See Notes to Combination II, Excerpt {f}.) Although the Aramaic provenance of this phonetic feature is indisputable for the early eighth century B.C.E., it is hardly a sufficient criterion on which to base the classification of the Deir ʿAlla language. Nor is the occurrence of the Ithpeel form or use of several verbs more at home in Aramaic than in Hebrew or Canaanite, like *ʿ-l-l* "to enter," or *ʿ-b-d* "to do, make."

On balance, it is the syntax of the Balaam texts that argues most convincingly for its classification as a Canaanite or Northwest-Semitic language of a regional character, one K. McCarter (1980) called "Gileadite." The syntax is mixed, but incorporates consecutive tenses and uses the *waw* conversive, what W. Moran calls "the *waw* of succession." This feature occurs with the prefixed conjugation possibly as many as nine times in Combination I, and once at the beginning of Combination II. It has been claimed that Old Aramaic also knew of the *waw* conversive and employed it. Hoftijzer (1976:296, number 23) had argued this view on the evidence of the Zakkur inscription from Hamath, in Syria, dated to about the end of the ninth or beginning of the eighth century, thus making it virtually contemporary with the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions. The fact is, however, that *waw* conversive is restricted to an excerpt contained within the Zakkur inscription, which probably represents the earlier culture of Hamath before it was Aramaized, and that reads virtually like Hebrew. The *waw* conversive is not attested in the properly Aramaic sections of the Zakkur inscription.

More recently, the Aramaic inscription from Tell Dan, discovered by A. Biran, and published by him together with J. Naveh (Biran and Naveh 1993, 1994) has been cited as an example of the use of the *waw* conversive in Aramaic. It is argued that if this is so in an undisputedly Aramaic inscription about a half-century older than the Deir ʿAlla text, and originating in Northern Israel, why should not the Deir ʿAlla texts also be classified as Aramaic? The fact is, however, that the syntax of the Tell Dan inscription is based on usage of the preterit with *waw* conjunctive, as was originally maintained by its publishers. Preteritial usage in the Tell Dan inscription has now been explained in detail by T. Muraoka (1995), showing that this inscription does not actually attest *waw* conversive, at least not in the prefixed conjugation. Thus, the form *ysq* (= *yissaq*, from *n-s-q*) in line 2 of the Tell Dan inscription is not durative, and is therefore to be analyzed as the preterit, not as the imperfect. It simply means "He went up," or the like, just as in line 3, *yhk* (= *yehak*) means "He went." In summary, the presence of *waw* conversive in the Deir ʿAlla texts argues against a contemporary Aramaic classification, and actually endorses the Transjordanian regional provenance advocated in this commentary.

Nor does the script of the Deir ʿAlla texts argue against their authorship by one or more members of the Israelite community of Transjordan. The script derives from the Aramaic script group, of course, and Cross and Puech suggest that it exhibits characteristics of Ammonite script. At a site like Deir ʿAlla, one would not be surprised to find Ammonite scribes at work, or Aramaean scribes, for that matter. Script hardly determines for whom the texts speak. Thus it is that the language of the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions, with its limited Aramaic characteristics, supports the suggested provenance of these texts as being indigenous to the general area of Deir ʿAlla in Transjordan, and that is the important point regarding their *Sitz-im-Leben*. Thus, even Weippert (1991), who suggests a different reconstruction of the development of Aramaic and of the Canaanite languages, and views the language of the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions as being closer to the Aramaic development, insists on their being indigenous, nonetheless.

The Literary Character of the Texts

Attention has already been called to the poetic quality of the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions, and in the Notes many affinities of diction and theme between biblical literature and the Balaam texts from Deir ʿAlla were registered. Here, we will review the most compelling of these in an effort to demonstrate the closeness of the inscriptions to biblical creativity. Taking up Combination II first, we note the term *nqr* "corpse," which we have explained as cognate with rare Hebrew *nēṣer* "carrion, corpse" in Isaiah 14:19. In fact, Combination II attests several telling dictional links to Isaiah 14. Both sources contain descriptions of the netherworld, and it is even possible that the word *šeʾôl* actually occurs in Combination II. It does in Isaiah 14:11, where we also read: *taḥtêkā yûṣṣaʿ rîmāh* "Wormrot is to be set under you as your bed." This recalls what we read in Deir ʿAlla, Combination II, as quite certainly restored: *[rmh] tḥt r'šk* "Worm rot is beneath your head." Isaiah 14:19 speaks of *lebuš harugîm* "the wrap of the slain," whereas Deir ʿAlla, Combination II, has: *mn mškb mtksn lbš* "From the bed, they cover themselves with a wrap," which in turn recalls Isaiah 14:11: *ûmekassêkā tôlēʿāh* "and what covers you is worm." Isaiah 14:18 states: *kullām šākebû bekābôd* "They all repose in honor," whereas Deir ʿAlla, Combination II has: *tškb mškby ʿlmyk* "You shall lie on your eternal bedding." There are additional parallels. Finally, as regards Combination II and Isaiah 14, it has been noted that both speak of El. The necropolis, *byt ʿlmn*, was built by El (Combination II, Excerpt a). The arrogant king of Babylon in Isaiah 14 seeks to elevate his throne above the stars of El, and to dwell "on the mountain of the divine council" (*behar môʿēd*).

Turning now to Combination I, we note many internal affinities with the biblical Balaam poems. Once again, El is prominent in both sources. Both refer to Shadday; at Deir ʿAlla we note for the first time a pluralized form, *šdyn* (= *šaddāyîn*). In both sources, Balaam is visited by a divine being, or divine beings, at night, and told what God, or the gods, will do, a thought conveyed by the verb *pāʿal* "to do, act" in both sources. In the biblical Balaam poems it is said of Balaam: *'ašer maḥazeh Šadday yeḥezeh* "Who beholds the vision of Shadday," and in the Deir ʿAlla text we read: *wyḥz mḥzh kmš' 'l* "And he beheld a vision in accordance with El's utterance." In Combination I at Deir ʿAlla it is said of Balaam: *'š ḥzh 'lhn h'* "A divine seer is he."

Beyond specific affinities between the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions and the biblical Balaam poems, or the Sheol oracle of Isaiah 14, there are no less compelling affinities with other biblical texts. It was Hoftijzer (1976) who first called attention to the relevance of biblical predictions of disaster to the proper interpretation of the Balaam inscriptions from Deir ʿAlla. There are two biblical passages that closely parallel the diction of the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions, especially those parts of Combination I that portray the misfortune to come.

a) Zeph 1:14–17:
The great day of YHWH is approaching . . .
That day shall be a day of wrath,
A day of trouble and distress,
A day of darkness and deep gloom (*ḥōšek wa'apēlāh*) . . .
A day of dense clouds (*ʿānān waʿarāpel*)
A day of horn blasts and alarms.

b) Ezekiel 32:3–8:
Thus said YHWH, God:
I will cast my net over you . . .
I will cause all the birds of the sky to settle upon you,

I will cause the beasts of all the earth to batten on you.
I will cover your sky by extinguishing,
I will darken their stars,
I will cover the sun with clouds,
And the moon shall not give its light.
All the lights that shine in the sky,
I will darken above you.
And I will bring darkness upon your land.

The pervasive dictional and thematic affinities between the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions and the biblical Balaam poems, and other El literature in the Hebrew Bible strengthen the argument for cultural affinity, and, when factored in with historical and demographic considerations, at least allow for the conclusion that the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions were of Transjordanian-Israelite authorship. There are also cultural reflections in the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions that point to Syro-Mesopotamian themes. These do not necessarily point away from Israelite authorship, however. In fact, they correlate well with biblical themes, while at the same time showing how diverse were the components of Transjordanian literature in the early eighth century B.C.E. One must endorse Weippert's assessment that the discovery of the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions has changed our understanding of the level of culture in central Transjordan. It was much more literate and creative than we might have imagined (Weippert 1991).

The description of the netherworld in Combination II shows close ties to Mesopotamian literature. Sheol is called a house (*bayit*) in Job 30:23, and in Isaiah 14:18 we read that each king had his own mansion in the netherworld. The most dramatic parallel to the opening lines of Combination II, where sequential statements begin with the *byt* "house," is a passage in the Semitic version of "The Descent of Ishtar." This myth, known in any number of versions from early times and down to the first millennium B.C.E., expresses the theme of fertility. While Ishtar is held captive in the netherworld, and until she is liberated, nothing grows on earth; no animals are born, and no humans make love. The most relevant passage reads:

To the dark house, the abode of Irka[la],
To the house which none leave who have entered it,
To the road from which there is no way back,
To the house wherein the entrants are bereft of li[ght].
(Speiser 1969:107)

Remembering that the goddess featured in Combination I of the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions has a composite name that includes Ishtar, we would see considerable significance in the similarity of the passage from "The Descent of

Ishtar" to Combination II. In Combination I, the theme of celestial darkness, presented in the manner of an omen that Balaam proceeds to interpret, also has close parallels in Syro-Mesopotamian omen literature, and is, more precisely, associated with the astral synthesis of Ishtar and Venus. The reference to *ngh,* Hebrew *nōgah* "brilliance" in Combination I, is very telling in this regard, because in postbiblical Jewish literature [*kōkab*] *nōgah* is the Hebrew name of Venus (L. Ginzberg 1947, V:29, note 80). The later tradition undoubtedly took its cue from usage of *nōgah* in biblical literature, where it contrasts with *ḥōšek* "darkness" just as it does in the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions (Amos 5:20, and cf. Isa 50:10, 59:9). What is more, *nōgah* is used to connote the light of stars (Joel 2:10, 4:15).

E. Reiner and D. Pingree have published new editions of the Babylonian omen series, *Enuma Anu Enlil* (= *EAE;* Reiner and Pingree 1981). Examining the protases and apodoses and the terms of reference that inform these omen texts affords insight into the meaning of the ominous foreboding of the Balaam inscriptions from Deir ʿAlla. The Babylonian series represent an Old Babylonian tradition, but in their preserved form are probably the work of early first millennium B.C.E. scribes.

Let us consider a number of themes characteristic of the Babylonian omen series.

a) On the visibility, or shining of stars:
Bright stars are for the rising of wind;
Scintillating stars (*napḫu*) are for the rising of wind (*EAE* 50–51, III:15–16).

b) On obscure stars:
Veiled stars (*katmū*) are for abated wind (*EAE* 50–51, III:18).

It must be explained that rising wind (Akkadian *tību*) signals rain, which is a good forecast (*EAE* 50–51, IV:10–11, 13). The Akkadian verb *katāmu* "to cover" is suggestive, because it can refer to covering with a garment, not only to covering the heavens with smoke, dust or fog (*CAD* K:298–303, especially meanings 1, d–e). This recalls the order of the gods to Shagar-and-Ishtar to sew up the heavens, and brings us back to biblical themes as well. In Hebrew poetry, the heavens are described as a tent flap. Thus we read of the God of Israel as creator in Isaiah 40:22:

Who spread out the heavens like gauze,
Stretched them out like a tent for dwelling.

Also note Psalm 104:2:

> You wrap yourself in light like a garment,
> Spread out the heavens like a tent flap.

There are additional affinities of diction between the omen of celestial darkness in the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions and the Babylonian omen series (Levine 1991). Perhaps the most telling as regards the astral synthesis of Ishtar and Venus occurs in a series of consecutive entries in *EAE* 50–51, IV:65 that set forth the astral profile of Ishtar-Venus:

> The Star of Men is for pestilence.
> Venus is seen in the west—she is male (*zik-rat*).
> The Star of Women is for taking a wife [. . .], for giving birth to males.
> Venus is seen in the east—she is female (*šin-ni-šat*).

The aspect of fertility is fused with the aspect of celestial brilliance. Ishtar-Venus is hermaphroditic; her male aspect is antilife, associated with pestilence and infertility, whereas her female aspect is that of life and fertility. The fusion expressed in the Babylonian omens gives meaning to the composite name of the goddess *Šgr-w-ʿštr*, which represents the hypostasis of "giving birth" conveyed by the verb *š-g-r* (see Notes to Combination I). Syro-Mesopotamian themes were current in West Semitic texts during the late second and early first millennium B.C.E. For example, at Ugarit we find West Semitic renditions of *šumma izbu* omens in the Ugaritic language (A. Herdner 1978:44–63). If the inscription from Arslan Tash is authentic, and not a forgery, as some maintain, it is relevant to recall Albright's identification in it of a passage from the Neo-Assyrian *utūkkê limnūtī* magical series rendered almost verbatim in a West Semitic language (Albright 1939). We should not be surprised, therefore, to find at Deir ʿAlla themes best known to us from the Syro-Mesopotamian civilization. After all, so many of these themes are also reflected in biblical literature.

Would an Israelite Have Written the Deir ʿAlla Inscriptions?

Assuming the above comparisons to be well founded, one is prompted to ask whether texts expressive of such blatantly divinatory beliefs and polytheistic motifs could have been authored by Israelites. As against affinities of diction and theme between the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions and biblical literature we must acknowledge a pagan spirit animating the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions, one that collides with the strong disapproval of most forms of divination expressed in biblical literature, from relatively early times. It must be remembered, however, that the official or strictly monotheistic views expressed primarily in biblical law and prophecy speak for only certain circles within the Israelite society. Based merely on what prophets and other spokesmen for Israelite monotheism had to say, and what they condemned, we have the impression that the sort of divination and mythological conflict that the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions relate were not foreign to the Israelite ethos, on both sides of the Jordan. Weippert (1991:178) posed the identical question as was posed above, and although his answer differs in some respects from the one suggested here, there is much common ground on essential definitions. This is part of what he has to say:

> Is the Deir ʿAlla Balaam text or are the plaster inscriptions Israelite? Usually, the absence of the divine name Yahweh and the undeniable presence of pantheon are adduced in favour of an answer in the negative . . . It is certainly true that Yahweh was the national god of both Israel and Judah. . . . But this does not imply that he was venerated with the same intensity by all Israelites and Judeans, or at every local or regional bama. Thus a polytheistic inscription from a region which according to the Bible had an Israelite population would not per se be non-Israelite.

The roles enacted by Balaam in the Deir ʿAlla texts are revealing in this regard. Usage of the noun *ḥt[t]* (= Hebrew *ḥittāt, ḥittît*) "dread" in Combination I, in the projection of the celestial omen recalls Jeremiah's assurance, still apparently necessary at a relatively late date in biblical history, that Israel has naught to fear from celestial omens:

ûmēʾotot haššāmayim ʾal tēḥāttû
kî yēḥattû haggôyîm mēhēmāh

Do not be in dread of the celestial omens;
Let the nations be in dread of them! (Jer 10:2)

The vision of celestial darkness is associated with the role of the *ʿônēn*, or *meʿônēn* "cloud-watcher," a term occurring together with *qōsēm* "diviner" in Deuteronomy 18:10, 14. In Isaiah 2:6, this terminology occurs together with *kaššāp* "sorcerer" (cf. Jer 27:9). In Joshua 13:22, Balaam is actually classified as a *qôsēm*. The Adad and Ishtar omen series deal at great length with the observation of clouds—their density, movements and positions at given times relative to the stars. The key verbs in Akkadian are *arāmu* "to cover, stretch or place a membrane, skin or layer of metal over an object," and *adāru* "to obscure." (CAD A I:103–108, s.v. *adāru* A, especially meaning 2). CAD A II:228–230, s.v. *arāmu* cites the omen series Adad 112:14:7:

šumma erpētu ṣalimtu elât šāmê i-rim

If a black cloud covers the upper sky.

Or, Ishtar IX:4:

[šumma] Ištar ina pan šatti ši-ši-tam ár-mat

If in the spring of the year, Ishtar is covered by a "membrane."

Or, to return to the Ishtar omens, *EAE* 50–51, II:7c:

DIL.BAT ina ITI.APIN a-dir

Venus in month VIII is obscured.

The Deir ʿAlla inscriptions explicitly classify Balaam as a *ḥōzeh* "seer." Biblical literature speaks of the work of the *ḥōzeh* in conjunction with divination, and in a passage of great relevance to the present discussion:

It shall be night for you without visions (*mēḥāzôn*),
And darkness for you without divination (*miqqesōm*)
The sun shall set over the prophets (*ʿal hannebîʾîm*),
And daytime shall be darkened for them (Micah 3:6–7).

What we observe, both in biblical literature and in the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions, is a mixing of roles that in the Syro-Mesopotamian magical literature are carefully differentiated professionally. This subject has recently been treated in an informative study by M. Moore (1991). In Chapter 2, "The Roles Enacted by Balaam Bar Beor at Deir ʿAlla," Moore discusses those features of Balaam's performance at Deir ʿAlla that correlate with the functions of the Syro-Mesopotamian *barû* "diviner." He focuses on the significance of answers received from the gods to the petitions submitted to them. Using role theory, Moore proceeds to identify the types of magic referred to in the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions, such as the utilization of rods or wands (*mṭh, ḥṭr*), called rhabdomancy, and the experiencing of visual or audial nocturnal dreams or revelations, known as oneiromancy. Of unusual interest is Moore's discussion of Balaam in the role of exorcist in the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions. In the introduction to Combination I, it was proposed that it was Balaam who had the goddess Shagar-and-Ishtar taken to several kinds of magicians who were enlisted to assist him in freeing her from the edict of the divine council. By our reading of Combination I, Balaam was ultimately successful in his effort. If correct, this interpretation would place great emphasis on Balaam as an exorcist, as Moore does in his discussion of the roles enacted by Balaam.

The interpretation by which Balaam, in playing out his roles, did battle with the council of inimical gods and Shadday-gods, and won, has been criticized by V. Sasson (1985, 1986a, 1986b), and others, as running counter to ancient Near Eastern beliefs, according to which an edict of the gods could not be countermanded by humans. This would be true if the engagement projected in the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions were simply a human-divine encounter, but it was not. El sent friendly gods to warn Balaam of the disaster to come, a disaster depicted in mythological terms, and presented in the idiom of a celestial omen. This means that there were gods on Balaam's side, who were also on the side of the goddess Shagar-and-Ishtar, herself. El and his group of gods sought to undo the edict of the rebellious council, undoubtedly composed of lesser deities, and this backing by El lent special potency to the magical means undertaken at Balaam's instigation to free the goddess.

What emerges most clearly from Moore's discussion is a triangular imaging of roles, wherein the evidence of the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions and the Syro-Mesopotamian magical literature are the angles and the evidence of the Hebrew Bible is the hypotenuse of the triangle. The Syro-Mesopotamian features cited here do not, therefore, argue against Israelite authorship any more than does A. Guillaume's classification of Balaam as "prophète divinatoire," somewhat similar in the roles he enacts to the Arab *kahīn* (Guillaume 1938).

An Afterword

Plaster writing is emerging as a significant factor in biblical archaeology. The recently discovered plaster inscriptions from Kunṭillet ʿAjrud, a site south of Kadesh Barnea, dated somewhat earlier than the Deir ʿAlla inscriptions, are a case in point (Meshel 1992, in *ABD* IV:103–109). Both discoveries lend realism to the commandment of Deuteronomy 27:2–3:

> And it shall be on the day that you cross the Jordan into the land that YHWH, your God, is granting to you, that you shall erect large stones, and cover them with plaster. And you shall write on them all of the words of this teaching when you cross over.

There has been considerable discussion about the original disposition of the plaster inscriptions at Deir ʿAlla. The copies made by Hoftijzer and van der Kooij in the original publication show parts written in red ink. Internally, the first half of line 1 and the second half of line 2 of Combination I are written in red ink. One can assume that this was for the purpose of highlighting the incipit of the series of plaster inscriptions. Externally, we see a horizontal, thick, red line drawn across the top of Combination I and extending further to its left. In addition, a vertical red line, drawn from top to bottom down along the left margin of Combination I, produces a T effect. This manner of bordering suggests that at least one other column might have been written to the left of Combination I, or that one or more columns had been anticipated but not executed. Thus, red ink was used to section off columns, at least in the horizontal dimension, as they appeared on the wall. Quite possibly, Combination II fitted in under Combination I, because Combination I breaks off in a diagonal section, and Combination II commences at its top in the reverse diagonal. If, indeed, Combination II represents a continuation of Combination I, then there may be some structural significance to the fact that half of line 17 of Combination II was written in red ink, for that line may represent the end of a textual unit that began in Combination I. There are two clues in Combination II to a possible reference to Balaam, suggesting that it is he who is the corpse languishing in Sheol as punishment for having defied the council of inimical gods:

Excerpt {c}:
hlʿṣh bk lytʿṣ
ʾw lmlkh lytmlk
If it is for counsel, no one will consult you,
Or for his advice, no one will take counsel.

Excerpt {i}:
ldʿt spr dbr lʿmh
ʿl lšn lk nšpṭ
wmlqb ʾmr
To know how to deliver a [divine] word to his people.
You have been condemned for your speech,
And [banned] from pronouncing words of execration.

Although Balaam's name cannot be read anywhere in Combination II, as we now have it, references to the disqualification of a counselor, and the denial of skills to a diviner whose profession it is to pronounce execrations recall Balaam's admonition to the adversaries of Shagar-and-Ishtar. They subsequently heard *ḥarāšîm* "incantations," undoubtedly pronounced by Balaam himself. In any event, both Combinations were part of a collection of orations by Balaam, who operated under the sponsorship of El, whose utterances he transmitted and whose assignments he executed. This much is certain. As is true of biblical collections of prophecies attributed to one spokesman, separate orations may cover a range of subjects. And yet, it is tempting to regard Combination II as a dramatic description of Balaam's own tragedy.

PART III.

NUMBERS 25: THE SIN OF BAAL PEOR

◆

INTRODUCTION

Positioned after Numbers 21–24, the account of the Baal Peor incident in Numbers 25 reveals that even the new generation of Israelites, who had been victorious over the Amorites, were not immune to sinfulness. Having survived whatever tactics were used against them by the Moabites in the effort to expel them from northern Moab, the Israelites let their guard down and began to take up with Moabite women (and by one version, Midianite women, as well), who led them into the worship of Baal Peor. There is an allusive link between the Balaam Pericope and the Baal Peor incident. In Numbers 23:28 we read that, after his second oration, Balaam was taken by Balak to "the summit of Peor" (*rōʾš happeʿôr*), overlooking the wasteland. The designation *Baʿal-Peʿôr* is best identified as a local realization of Baal, a deity worshipped at a temple or other cult installation that stood on the site of Peor. Like other peoples of the region, the Moabites undoubtedly worshipped a regional pantheon, in which Kemosh figured as the national god. In this configuration Baal, who was worshipped in many other local cults, was also venerated. Numbers 25 is comprised of two, fairly distinct parts (see Notes to Num. 25:3).

(1) Numbers 25:1–5 (JE)—The primary account of the Baal Peor incident, involving only Israelites and Moabites. The Israelites settled down at Shittim (sometimes referred to as Abel-Shittim), east of the Jordan, and began to have relations with Moabite women, most likely marrying up with them or taking them as concubines. As might have been expected, these women invited their Israelite mates to participate in the cult of Baal Peor. This led to widespread idolatry, and YHWH became enraged. He ordered Moses to impale all of the leaders of the Israelites, facing the sun, an act intended to assuage divine wrath. The language of this passage is reminiscent of the incident involving David and the Gibeonites, and the impaling of seven of Saul's descendants. That act was intended to avert divine wrath over Saul's violation of the covenant with the Gibeonites (2 Sam 21:1–11).

Moses then commanded the magistrates, who had presumably remained loyal to YHWH, to kill any of their own people who had become devotees of Baal Peor. This recalls Moses' response to the sin of the golden bull-calf (Exod 32:26–29). As will be observed, Numbers 25 generally exhibits considerable intertextuality. Looking ahead to a discussion of Numbers 25, as a whole, we note that there are references to the Baal Peor incident in Numbers 31:16 (P), within the account of the Midianite war. It is also mentioned by the Deuteronomist (Deut 4:3), who admonishes the Transjordanian Israelites in words characteristic of priestly writing (Jos 22:17). A late Psalm (106:28) refers to this incident in a review of Israelite history. It is Hosea, the Northern Israelite prophet, who provides the only early reference to this incident, recalling that all was well between Israel and their God in the wilderness until the Israelites defiled themselves by worshipping Baal Peor (Hos 9:10). Hosea's reference to the Baal Peor account represents a Northern Israelite tradition, possibly of Transjordanian origin. Note that in the JE version, only the Israelites are held accountable for the paganism at Peor, whereas in the priestly version, the blame is shared with the Midianites, who were introduced into the story by priestly writers.

(2) Num 25:6–26:1a (P)—The priestly version of the Baal Peor incident and its consequences. Priestly writers developed the brief JE account into a more detailed narrative, sharpening the issues addressed, and involving the Midianites in the process. We are told that a certain Israelite actually presented a Midianite woman to his kinsmen in full view of Moses and the community, while they were still bemoaning the fate of the many Israelites and their leaders who had met their death after engaging in pagan worship. Phinehas, Aaron's grandson, rose to the occasion, and stabbed both the Israelite man and his Midianite partner at the *qūbbah*-tent, where they were engaging in flagrant pagan worship, whereupon the plague (of which there had been no explicit mention) terminated. Twenty-four thousand Israelites died in that plague (Num 25:6–9).

In return for his zeal in appeasing YHWH's wrath and restoring the proper worship of him within the Israelite community, as well as saving the rest of the Israelites, Phinehas was granted an everlasting covenant, assuring that his descendants would hold the office of the Israelite chief-priesthood forever. As if to add precision to their account, the priestly writers recorded the names of the Israelite man and the Midianite woman whom Phinehas had killed, identifying them both as persons of high rank within their respective peoples. The Baal Peor incident thus assumes an etiological character in the priestly version, providing an historical basis for the divine election of the Eleazarite line of the Aaronide priesthood (Num 25:10–15). In the priestly version, the Midianites are blamed for actively conspiring to lure the Israelites into idolatry. Their entrapment of the Israelites is considered tantamount to aggression, and triggers a divine command to attack and slay the Midianites (Num 25:16–19). This mandate is fulfilled in Numbers 31, where we read a priestly record of a war with the Midianites.

In the Comments to Numbers 25, it will be explained how this chapter fits into the overall agenda of the Book of Numbers, and reflects the various views of the Wilderness Period expressed in it. The Baal Peor incident has attracted modern scholarly interest, as it had stimulated postbiblical commentary in late antiquity. The admixture of sexual allusions and pagan cultic practices and the ambiguities of language that characterize Numbers 25 have given free rein to the interpretive imagination.

TRANSLATION

25 [1]The Israelites were settled down at Shittim when the people began to pursue improper relations with the young women of Moab.

[2]These invited the people to the sacrificial feasts of their god(s). The people partook, while prostrating themselves before their god(s).

[3]The Israelites became attached to Baal Peor, whereupon YHWH became enraged at the Israelites.

[4]Then YHWH said to Moses: Seize all of the leaders of the people and impale them to YHWH, facing the sun, so that the wrath of YHWH may be turned back from the Israelites.

[5]Thereupon Moses ordered the Israelite commanders: "Each of you is to kill those of his people who have become attached to Baal Peor."

[6]Just then, one man from among the Israelites arrived, and presented the Midianite woman to his kinsmen in view of Moses and in view of the entire community of Israel, as they were wailing at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.

[7]Now, Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest observed this. He arose from the midst of the community, holding a spear in his hand.

[8]He followed the Israelite man to the *qubbah*-tent, and stabbed them both, the Israelite man and the woman, at her *qubbah*-tent. The plague was then contained [and prevented] from attacking the Israelites.

[9]The dead in the plague numbered four and twenty thousand.

[10]Then YHWH spoke to Moses:

[11]Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has held back my wrath from against the Israelite people by zealously enacting my zeal in their midst, so that I did not annihilate the Israelite people in my [wrathful] zeal.

[12]Say, therefore: I hereby grant to him my covenant of fellowship.

[13]To him and his descendants after him this shall endure as a covenant of everlasting priesthood. It is in return for his having acted zealously on behalf of his God, through which he secured expiation for the Israelite people.

[14]The name of the slain Israelite man, who was slain together with the Midianite woman, is Zimri the son of Salu, [who was] a chieftain of a patriarchal "house" of the Simeonites.

[15]The name of the slain Midianite woman is Kozbi, the daughter of Zur, who was, in turn, head of the leagues of patriarchal "houses" among the Midianites.

[16]Then YHWH commanded Moses as follows:

[17]Attack the Midianites and you shall slay them!

[18]For they committed aggression against you by their deceptions, which they perpetrated against you in the incident of Peor; and in the incident of Kozbi, the daughter of the Midianite chieftain, their kinswoman, who was slain at the time of the plague *in the incident of Peor.*

NOTES TO NUMBERS 25:1–5: THE PRIMARY VERSION OF THE BAAL PEOR INCIDENT (JE)

1. *The Israelites were settled down at Shittim.* Use of the verb *y-š-b* indicates protracted residence, the act of settling a town or occupying it. Thus, we read in Numbers 21:28 that, after defeating the Amorites, the Israelites "settled (*wayyēšeb*) in all of their towns." The sense differs from that of encampment, for example, which is projected as a temporary state. It is probable, therefore, that the account of the Baal Peor incident was originally one of the traditions of the Transjordanian Israelite community, and not simply a record of an event occurring along the Israelite march to Canaan.

Hebrew *haššiṭṭîm* means "the acacia trees." It is the abbreviated form of *’Ābēl-Haššiṭṭîm* (Num 33:49, and see Notes ad loc.), identified as Tell el-Hamaam, and there listed as the final station of the Israelite march to the Promised Land, a site located in the Plains of Moab. Joshua dispatched the spies from that site (Jos 2:1, 3:1). Numbers 25:1 picks up where Numbers 22:1 leaves off. There we read that the Israelites had arrived at the Plains of Moab, and their settlement in that area is further specified here. The entire Balaam Pericope was inserted, and, indeed, derives from separate sources (see Introduction to the Balaam Pericope, Numbers 22–24).

when the people began to pursue improper relations

The force of the conjunctive *waw* in the second clause is temporal, or possibly circumstantial: "when the people began," or "the people having begun." The construction *zānāh ’el* in the Hebrew text is unusual, because the verb *z-n-h* "to commit harlotry," when it connotes actual sexual activity, and is not being used figuratively to connote betrayal or infidelity, usually takes zero object (Gen 38:24, Lev 21:9, Hos 2:7). When *z-n-h* is used metaphorically, the syntax is usually *zānāh ’aḥarê* "to go astray after-" (Exod 34:15, Judg 2:17). It is in Ezekiel (16:26, 28) that we find *zānāh ’el* used metaphorically, in the context of Judah's improper relations with Egypt and Assyria. Possibly, prepositional *ʾel* replaces the usual *ʾaḥarê* "after, following." The preceding review of usage suggests that prepositional *ʾel* in the present verse may also be figurative, signifying betrayal and not actual harlotry as a sexual offense. Perhaps it is a derisive way of characterizing marriage or concubinage with Moabite women as improper for Israelites, largely for the reason that such unions lead to paganism. Perhaps the issue in the JE version is paganism, not harlotry and promiscuity; certainly not sacred prostitution. Settled among Moabites, Israelite men began to intermarry with them, and this led to widespread idolatry, just as was feared. At this point, there is no suggestion that Moabite women acted as temptresses to demoralize the Israelite men, an innuendo decidedly present in the priestly version (Num 25:6–19), and in Numbers 31:16, a related, priestly record of a war with the Midianites.

2. *These invited the people.* The verb *q-r-ʾ* may connote an invitation to a formal celebration (1 Kings 1:10, 19, 26, 41, 49). It is on this basis that those invited to a sacrificial feast are known as *qerûʾîm* "invitees" (1 Sam 9:13, 22, Zech 1:7). The Israelite men partook of the pagan sacrifices together with their Moabite wives and concubines. Use of the plural *ʾelōhêhen* "their god/ gods," namely, of the Moabite women, is ambiguous, since the following verse speaks only of one pagan deity, Baal Peor. As noted by Gray (Gray-ICC:381–382), Kemosh, the national god of the Moabites, is referred to as *Kemôš ʾelōhêkā* in Judges 11:24 (cf. 1 Kings 11:33), suggesting that the sense here is "their god," expressed in plural form but with singular reference in the manner of references to the God of Israel.

3. *became attached to Baal Peor.* The verb *ṣ-m-d,* cognate with Akkadian *ṣamādu,* means "to bind, hitch," and its primary context is that of hitching horses or cattle to a yoke. Hence, such nominal forms as *ṣemed* "team, yoke" (Judg 19:10, 1 Sam 11:8) and note, as well, the noun *ṣāmîd* "fillet, bracelet" (Num 19:15, Gen 24:22). A conditioned phonetic shift probably accounts for the *hapax, ṣāpad* (instead of *ṣāmad*) in Lamentations 4:8: "Their skin stuck to their bone (*ṣāpad ʿôrām ʿal ʿaṣmām*)." Once in biblical literature, the Pual is said of fastening a sword around one's waist (2 Sam 20:8), and in Psalm 50:19 the Hiphil occurs: "You let loose your mouth with evil words, and you hitch your tongue (*ûlešônekā taṣmîd*) to acts of deceit." In Eblaic incantations, the verb *samadu* connotes the binding of evil spirits to the will of the magical practitioner by means of spells and incantations (Edzard 1984:50, Index, s.v. *a-zame-du*), and this is its sense in Semitic magical literature of all periods. In biblical literature, almost all of the verbal attestations of the verb *ṣ-m-d* occur here and in Psalm 106:28, a later reference to the Baal Peor incident. This is the key word in characterizing the apostasy of Baal Peor, which is not characterized in the usual way as serving other gods, or bowing down before them, or going astray after them. Perhaps the sense of *ṣ-m-d* is similar to that

of "adherence," conveyed in biblical Hebrew by the verb *d-b-q* "to stick to-" often used to characterize religious devotion (Deut 11:22, Ps 63:9), or personal loyalty and affection (2 Sam 20:2, Gen 34:3). These are all positive connotations, and yet, *d-b-q* may also connote the pursuit of evil ways, as we read that Ahab adhered to (*dābēq*) the sinful ways of Jeroboam, his predecessor (2 Kings 3:3).

What makes the comparison of *ṣ-m-d* and *d-b-q* more compelling is the fact that both are used to describe the sticking of skin to bone in describing the affliction of those suffering from famine. The variant form *ṣ-p-d* (Lament 4:8) is so employed, as is *d-b-q* (Ps 102:6, Job 19:20). To the sword that is "hitched" (*meṣūmmedet*) to the midsection of the warrior (2 Sam 20:8) may be compared the statement in Jeremiah 13:11: "For as the belt adheres (*yidbāq*) to the midsection of a man, so have I joined (*hidbaqtî*) to me the entire House of Israel and the entire House of Judah, speech of YHWH, to be my people." Because the verb *ṣ-m-d* is used in magical incantations, its use in the present verse may convey the nuance of "spellbound, entranced," as if to say that the Israelites were so addicted to the worship of Baal Peor that they couldn't free themselves of it.

The Hebrew *Baʿal Peʿôr* has been interpreted variously. Some have taken it to signify "the Master of Peor," understanding *baʿal* as the title of the local (or national) deity, whoever he was, who was worshipped at Peor, rather than representing a specific divine name. There is strong evidence for such usage in Semitic inscriptions from all over the ancient Near East. We find divine names like *baʿal* and *ʾel* and their cognates, masculine and feminine, being used as common nouns (Fleming 1992). In a similar way, the West Semitic epithet *ʾādôn* "master" may refer to whichever deity is intended in the immediate context. The alternative is to understand the Hebrew *Baʿal Peʿôr* as the name of the deity worshipped at a site named *Peʿôr*, the toponym mentioned in Numbers 23:28 in the designation *rōʾš happeʿôr* "the summit of Peor." The sense would be "The Baal of Peor," the deity Baal as he was worshipped at a site named Peor. There is, once again, evidence from all over the ancient Near East that attests to local cults of well-known deities. It is also possible that the designation *Baʿal Peʿôr* may simply represent a toponym, as is evidently the case in Hosea 9:10. In such an event, it would constitute an abbreviation of **Bêt Baʿal Peʿôr*, on the model of *Bêt Baʿal Meʿôn* (Jos 13:17) that also occurs as *Baʿal Meʿôn* (Num 32:38; and see Gray-ICC: 382).

Whereas one would arrive at a site named Baal Peor, as in Hosea 9:10, it would not normally be said that one became attached, or devoted to the worship of a site named Baal Peor. But, since Numbers 23:28 provides the composite term *rōʾš happeʿôr* "the summit of Peor," and in Numbers 25:18–19 we find the repeated phrase "in the incident of Peor," there is reason to consider Peor as the essential toponym, in its own right, so that the combination Baal Peor would include reference to a deity or a divine epithet. In any case, the name of the deity, or of the site, tells us nothing about the precise nature of the cult referred to in this narrative. Nor does the Niphal verb *niṣmad* "to become attached" imply sexual contact as if to suggest that Israelite men engaged in orgiastic rites associated with the cult of Baal Peor.

4. *all of the leaders of the people.* This statement is probably to be taken loosely, because it is unlikely that all of the Israelite leaders were to be slain. The sense is that all involved with pagan worship were to be put to death. There is also a degree of inconsistency about leadership roles and the use of specific titles. The title *rā'šê hā'ām* "the leaders of the people" is fairly distinctive. In Deuteronomy 33:5, 21, we find *rā'šê 'ām* as an early designation of clan and tribal leaders, wherein *'am* retains its original sense of a kinship group. In the present account, *hā'ām,* the determined form, functions in the way normal in the JE source to designate the entire people of Israel. In Nehemiah 10:15 the title *rā'šê hā'ām* is revived. The closest we come to present usage is in Exodus 18:24, where we read that Moses appointed commanders of variously sized units, there called *rā'šîm 'al hā'ām* "leaders of the people." These were to judge the people: *wĕsapeṭû 'et hā'ām* (Exod 18:22). Here, however, the "heads, leaders" are among the sinful, whereas the "magistrates" (*šōpeṭîm*) presumably remained untarnished. The two roles are thus differentiated. The implication is, nevertheless, that each of the *šōpeṭîm* was in charge of a unit of Israelites, as set forth in Exodus 18, so that he could be ordered to kill those of "his people" (*'anāšāw*) who had lapsed into paganism.

and impale them to YHWH, facing the sun

The formula *le-YHWH* "to YHWH" strongly suggests sacrifice, indicating that YHWH is the recipient of the impaled humans. More will be said on this score in the Comments.

5. *the Israelite commanders.* The role of the *šōpeṭîm* has been discussed just above, in Notes to Numbers 25:4. This verse effectively concludes the episode as JE had it. The crisis was resolved by assuaging God's wrath through the sacrificial impaling of those leaders of the Israelites who had led the people astray, and by slaying those of the Israelites who had actually participated in the worship of Baal Peor.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 25:6–18: THE PRIESTLY VERSION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

6. Numbers 25:6–18 represent a priestly recasting of the Baal Peor incident. It is no longer *ha'am* "the people" that is being referred to but *kol 'adat*

benê Yiśrā'ēl "the entire Israelite community," a distinctly priestly locution (cf. Exod 16:1–2, 10 Num 8:20).

and presented the Midianite woman to his kinsmen

The determined form *hammidyānît* "the Midianite woman" is part of the priestly enmeshing of their version of the Baal Peor incident with that of JE. There is, after all, no previous mention of the Midianites in Numbers 25:1–5. Similarly, in Numbers 25:9, below, a plague is referred to, of which there is no previous mention. One wonders what it was that this Israelite did that was so objectionable. The text makes a point of informing the reader that the act occurred in full view of the community, a fact that presumably made it even more reprehensible. The language of the present verse is elusive regarding the religious or social significance of bringing the Midianite woman "near." In general usage, the Hiphil, *hiqrîb*, especially in the syntax *hiqrîb 'el*, means "to bring near," simply in spatial terms, without any further implication. In priestly diction, *hiqrîb 'el* can mean to choose another for inclusion. Thus, in Numbers 16:5 we read: *we'et haqqādôš wehiqrîb 'ēlāw*"—and who is consecrated to him, and will declare [him] his intimate; he will declare as his intimate the one whom he chooses (*yibḥar*)." The sense of the Hiphil would approximate that of the Piel, *qērēb*. Thus: *'ašrê tibḥar ûteqārēb* "Happy is the one you choose to bring near, to dwell in your temple courts" (Ps. 65:5). Once again, we note the synonymity of *bāḥar* "to choose" and *hiqrîb* "bring near."

There may be merit to Gray's suggestion (Gray-ICC:384) that use of the verb *hiqrîb* indicates that the Israelite man introduced the Midianite woman "to his kinsmen" (*'el 'eḥāw*), as his wife (see further, in Notes to Num 25:8). It is worth recalling that the verb *hiqrîb* often describes the offering of a sacrifice, suggesting that its use here is allusive, or charged, and that several motifs are fused in the priestly narrative. Most likely, the sense is that the Israelite was escorting the Midianite woman to the *qūbbah* for the purpose of engaging in pagan worship, which is what one would conclude from the continuation of the narrative. In times of crisis, the people assembled at the opening to the Tent of Meeting, probably in the area between the altar of burnt offerings and the courtyard gate. The people were mourning the death of thousands of Israelites in a plague of which there had been no previous mention.

7. *Now, Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest*

Phinehas is listed in the genealogy of Aaron as Eleazar's only son (Exod 6:25), and his name comes up again in Numbers 31, in the account of the Midianite war. As has been mentioned, that war is connected to the present priestly version of the Baal Peor incident. It should also be noted that several times the name of Phinehas serves as a link in the chain of the hereditary Aaronide priesthood. This is so in spin-offs of P, like Joshua 22:13, 30–32, 24:33, and in a priestly gloss in Judges 20:28. The present narrative provides a basis for the priestly mandate of the Aaronides of the Eleazarite line.

He arose from the midst of the community

The present Hebrew statement *wayāqom mittôk hāʿēdāh* resembles the clause *whn yqwm/tqwm bʿdh* "And if he/she will arise in the assembly," attested in an Aramaic papyrus from Elephantine, where we read of a husband or wife arising in the assembly to divorce the other (Porten-Yardeni 1989:30, s.v. B2. 6, lines 22, 26). Reference to the Israelite community as *hāʿēdāh "the* community" is an earmark of the priestly writers (Levine 1989b:22, s.v. Lev. 4:13).

holding a spear in his hand.

Hebrew *rōmaḥ* "spear, lance" occurs early on in the Song of Deborah (Judg 5:8), and only here in Torah literature. It is otherwise known as a fairly late term, at times paired with *ḥereb* "sword" (1 Kings 18:28, Jer 46:4, Ezek 39:9). In Joel 4:10, it replaces *ḥanît* "lance" in a paraphrase of Isaiah 2:4//Micah 4:3.

8. *He followed . . . to the* qubbah-*tent*

Idiomatic *bā’ ’aḥar/’aḥarê* means to follow (1 Sam 11:5), even to pursue (1 Sam 26:3). The preposition *’el* in: *’el haqqūbbāh* "to the *qūbbah*-tent" is not governed by the verb *bā’*, and does not connote entry. It is rather directional: "to, toward." In other words, Phinehas did not follow the two into the *qūbbah*-tent and then stab them inside it, but rather in front of it, or near it.

The understanding of Hebrew *haqqubbāh* is contextual, on the assumption that it designates the structure to which the Israelite man and the Midianite woman had repaired together. The fact that we have a determinate form, *haqqūbbāh*, suggests that it was an identifiable or known structure. Arabic, Syriac and Akkadian cognates of unique Hebrew *qūbbāh* have been adduced. Thus, Arabic *qubbatun* "alcove, dome," and Syriac *qumbā’*, *qumbetā’*, with similar meanings (*HALAT*:992, s.v. *qūbbāh*) have been suggested. Nuzi Akkadian attests a normally plural form, *quppātu*, which may be expressed in the Akkadian of Ugarit as *ḫuppātu* (plural), and that designates some sort of house in the fields, or in open country (*CAD* Q:311, s.v. *quppu* B). The appearance later on in this verse of the word vocalized *qobātāk* is suggestive, in this regard. It can be read in two ways: (1) Read: *’el qēbātāh* "into her belly" (Deut 18:3), an expected part of the body for stabbing (the verb *d-q-r*, cf. 1 Sam 31:4, Zech 12:20, 13:3); or (2) *’el *qobbātāh*, from *qubbāh*, hence: "at her *qubbah*-tent." In the first case, we would have a play on homophony. Reif (1971:200–206) has dealt with this passage, surveying exegetical literature and ancient versions, and more or less opts for the interpretation of Masoretic *qobātāk* as a repetition of *qubbāh*. He postulates a tendentious, derogatory vocalization, *qōbet*, modeled after *bōšet* "shame," but this may be overstated. With the mere augmentation of medial *beth*, we secure the reading *qobbātāh* "her *qubbāh*-tent." The notion that the Midianite woman was stabbed in her belly or womb probably reflects the view that harlotry or sacred prostitution was at the heart of the offense. If, however, we take the second occurrence as referring to the tent to which Phinehas followed the Israelite and the Midianite woman, we are not obliged to conclude that a sex act occurred at the *qubbah*-tent, but rather an act of sacrifice or celebration.

Morgenstern (1942–43:207–229, especially 209–210, note 81) associated the *qubbāh* of Numbers 25:8 with the pre-Islamic *qubbe,* a small, sacred tent made of red leather and used by various Arab tribes, in which *betyls,* or stone objects venerated by the tribe, were deposited. The *qubbe* was carried forth in the processionals of the annual *ḥajj* "pilgrimage," and was transported into major battles. Morgenstern's discussion of the *qubbe* comes as part of a larger study on the Ark, the Ephod and the Tent. He was of the view that the pre-Islamic *qubbe* was of great antiquity (see the Comments to Num 10:29–12:16; Levine 1993:335–337). In view of the suggestion, made in the Comments to Numbers 31, that the Midianites referred to in the context of war with the Israelites were Arabs of the Achaemenid period, this interpretation seems to be the most reasonable one historically.

The question poses itself as to what happened at the *qubbāh*-tent. The suffixed form **qobbātāh* "her *qūbbah*-tent" need not lead us to conclude that it was the Midianite woman's private tent; it could refer to a tent of the Midianites rather than of the Israelites. And yet, we are told that Kozbi, father of the Midianite woman, was the daughter of a leading Midianite, perhaps one who was to become king. It may be that her father's prominent clan had its own *qubbe,* much as a tribe would. From what Morgenstern and Lammens tell us, the *qubbe* was quite small, so that worship did not take place inside it, nor would it have served as a dwelling. More likely, whatever happened took place near the *qubbe,* perhaps at its entrance, much as Israelites worshipped at the opening to the Tent of Meeting. There is nothing to indicate that any orgiastic activity was associated with the *qūbbāh,* especially if its comparison with the pre-Islamic *qubbe* is endorsed. The Midianite woman, accompanied by the Israelite man, would have been engaging in pagan worship at the *qubbāh,* and this is what aroused Phinehas.

The plague was then contained [and prevented] from attacking the Israelites.

This clause is phrased in well attested priestly idiom. The verb *ʿ-ṣ-r* means "to constrain, hold back" (Deut 11:17, 2 Kings 4:24). Use of the Niphal, *neʿeṣar* with *maggēpāh* "plague," occurs in Psalm 106:30, in the classic reference to this incident, and in Numbers 17:13, 15, where Aaron acts to end a plague brought by God. In 2 Samuel 24:21, 25, the cessation of the plague is also described in this way.

9. *The dead . . . numbered.* Cf. similar postscripts in Numbers 17:14, Judges 16:30.

10. Numbers 25:10–15 serve as a brief etiology, announcing the Aaronide mandate over the chief priesthood of Israel, and attributing this election to the zeal of Phinehas.

11. *has held back my wrath.* Idiomatic, active transitive *hēšîb ḥēmāh* "to

draw back rage" is a reflex of *šûb ḥēmāh* "rage drew back" (Gen 27:44, Dan 9:16, and cf. Jer 18:20, Ps 106:23).

by zealously enacting my zeal

Here and in verse 13, just below, we find distinctive usage of the Piel *qinnēʼ*, which requires comment. It is entirely possible that all verbal forms are denominative of a noun, *qinʼāh* "zeal, passion," parallel with *ʼahabāh* "love" in Song of Songs 8:6. On this basis, syntax governs nuance, so that *qinnēʼ b-* means: "to express *qinʼāh* against," whereas *qinnēʼ l-* means: "to express *qinʼāh* on behalf of, on account of" (see Notes to Num 11:29; Levine 1993:326). In the present instance, Phinehas expressed God's own zeal; he acted on his behalf (cf. 1 Kings 19:10, 14). In Zechariah 1:14–15, 8:2, the God of Israel states that he will pour out his wrath on the nations out of a strong *qinʼāh* that he has for Zion: *qinnēʼtî le-Ṣiyyôn qinʼāh gedôlāh* "I have acted zealously out of a great zeal on Zion's account"; that is to say, against those who brought about Zion's destruction. On occasion, YHWH threatened to annihilate the Israelite people in his zeal, an act expressed by the verb *killāh* (Exod 32:10, 33:3, 2 Sam 22:39). In the present situation, his wrath was assuaged so that he did not do so.

12. *Say, therefore.* The abrupt Hebrew address: *lākēn ʼemōr*, literally: "Therefore, say," directly introducing a quotation, is unique in Scripture.

my covenant of fellowship.

We have opted to translate *berîtî šālôm* as an unusual construct formation, a variant of *berît šālôm* (Ezek 34:25, 37:26). It is possible to render the Hebrew *berîtî šālôm* as a double accusative, taking the two nouns as appositional: "Behold, I am granting him my covenant, fellowship." That is to say, my covenant will consist of fellowship. The postexilic prophet, Malachi (2:4–5), speaks of the covenant with Levi as follows: *lihyôt berîtî ʼet Lēwî* "That my covenant may be in effect with Levi." And subsequently: *berîtî hāyet̄ah ʼittô haḥayim wehăššālôm*, literally: "My covenant was with him, of life and fellowship." The sense of *šālôm* as "fellowship, alliance, friendship" is well attested in Scripture. Thus, the participial *nomen agentum*, *šôlēm*, means "ally, friend" in Psalm 7:5: "If I repaid my friend (*šôlemî*) evil" (Tigay 1970). Likewise, the stative, *šālēm*, in Genesis 34:21: "These people, they are allied with us (*šelēmîm hēm ʼittānû*)." In fact, the two occurrences of *berît šālôm* in Ezekiel 34:25, 37:26 both speak of amicable relations between God and Israel.

13. *this shall endure.* The wording of this verse further recalls Malachi 2:4–5 by its use of the verb *h-y-h* in the augmented sense of "enduring, being in force." The construction *berît ʻôlām* "an everlasting covenant" is well known (Gen 9:6, Exod 31:16, Ezek 16:60). The present expanded construction, *berît kehunnat ʻôlām*, compares with *berît melah ʻôlām* "the everlasting covenant (= rule) of salt" in Numbers 18:19. What we have is a double genitive, with the object *ʻôlām* modifying both subjects, *berît* as well as *kehūnnāh.* Hebrew

kehūnnāh can refer to priestly status (Num 16:10), and to the fellowship of priests (Num 18:1, 1 Sam 2:36).

he secured expiation for the Israelite people.

On the meanings of Hebrew *kippēr*, see Levine (1974:56–67). The Piel of the verb describes several actions, ranging from performing rites of expiation, to granting atonement (an act reserved for God), and, as here, to securing God's forgiveness through expiation. Most often, the verb *kippēr* refers to the utilization of sacrificial blood in rites of purification and expiation. Usage here is extended and resembles the sense of *kippēr* in Numbers 17:11–12, where Aaron, the High Priest, secured expiation for the Israelite community by using incense to protect them from a spreading plague. Here, the slaying of the leading offenders functioned virtually as a human sacrifice, one that assuaged YHWH's wrath.

14. *The name of the slain Israelite man.* Priestly writers liked detail, and so we are given the names of the man and woman whose acts were described earlier on, in Numbers 25:4–8. Both the man's name and that of his father have analogues in Scripture. For Zimri, see 1 Kings 16:9, where Zimri is a northern Israelite courtier (cf. 1 Chron 8:36). Salu is known only from late biblical sources (1 Chron 9:7, Neh 11:7, 12:7), and is attested in Aramaic (*HALAT*:714, s.v. *Salû'*).

[who was] a chieftain of a patriarchal "house" of the Simeonites.

It was Zimri who was the chieftain, not his father, Salu, although this is not immediately clear from the listing. Nevertheless, the formula X. son of Y. (also X. son of Y. son of Z) is bound, or frozen, so that whatever immediately follows pertains to the first name, not to the second or third names. Zimri is identified as *nāśî'* of a *bêt 'āb* of the Simeonites. On the meaning of the title *nāśî'* "chieftain" and of the unit known as *bêt 'āb* "patriarchal 'house' " see Notes to Numbers 1:2; Levine 1993:130–133, and cf. Numbers 1:4, Numbers 7:2. Numbers 3 provides detailed information on the organization of the tribe of Levi into clans and patriarchal "houses." There one finds listed: *neśî' bêt 'āb* "the chieftain of the partriarchal 'house' " of each of the three principal Levitical groupings (Num 3:24, 30). In Numbers 3:32, Aaron is listed as the ranking *nāśî'*. What was true of the tribe of Levi was true of all of the Israelite tribes, in the priestly structure.

The woman is named Kozbi, which would appear to be a symbolic name meaning "deceitful." She is the daughter of Zur (Hebrew *Ṣûr*), a good West Semitic name meaning "rock," a term that serves as a divine epithet. One of the five Midianite kings killed in the war with Israel was so named (Num 31:8, cf. Jos 13:21). At the point of the present story, the name Zur was that of a leading Midianite. In this case, and in contrast to the listing of Zimri, it is the woman Kozbi's father, Zur, who held high rank. His title is complex. In Numbers 25:15, below, he is designated as head (*rō'š*) of the *'ūmmôt* "leagues," that were comprised of the patriarchal "houses" (collective *bêt ’āb*) of the Midianites. According to Genesis 25:16, the descendants of Ishmael were led by the twelve *neśî’îm* of their *tribal leagues (le’ūmmōtām)*. It would seem that *’ūmmāh** as applied to Midianites or Ishmaelites would correspond to "tribe" (*šēbeṭ, maṭṭeh*) in the projected structure of the Israelite nation. Like the tribe, an *’ūmmāh* consisted of a number of patriarchal "houses," and the entire nation consisted of a number of *’ummôt*. In Psalm 117:1, masculine plural *’ummîm* is parallel with *gôyîm* "nations," and such is the sense of Aramaic *’ummayā’* "the peoples" in Ezra 4:10, and in Daniel 3:4, 29, where it occurs together with the terms *‘ām* "people" and *liššān* tongue." Further on, in Numbers 25:18, this woman's father is designated *neśî’ Midyān* "the chieftain of Midian." It would be incorrect to expect precise usage of titles in a narrative such as Numbers 25. It is not to be assumed, however, that the priestly writers were simply projecting Israelite social structures on the Midianites. More likely, such terminology and the comparable social units were common to Israelites and other groups in Canaan and in neighboring territories.

16–18. The last section of Numbers 25 lays the foundation for the Midianite war recounted in Numbers 31. The Israelites are commanded to make war against the Midianites.

Attack the Midianites and you shall slay them!

The Hebrew verb *ṣ-r-r* bears the sense of military aggression (Exod 23:22, Num 10:9, 33:55, Jer 11:13). The justification for the attack is clearly stated: What the Midianites have perpetrated by their deceptions was tantamount to war, and warrants referring to them as *ṣōrerîm* "aggressors." The Hebrew *niklêhem*, from the root n-k-l, connotes deception. In Malachi 1:14, one who has an umblemished male in his flock, but yet offers a blemished animal as a sacrifice instead, is called *nôkēl* "a cheat." The Hithpael, *hitnakkēl*, characterizes what Joseph's brothers did in their effort to bring about his death" (Gen 37:18; cf. Ps 105:25).

who was slain at the time of the plague

The Pual stem, *hukkāh* "was slain," appears repeatedly in Numbers 25:14–19. In effect, the priestly version, especially in this concluding section, condemns the Midianites for conspiring to seduce Israelite men into pagan worship, a result that the JE version regarded pretty much as an expected outcome of marriage with foreign women, or of consorting with them.

in the incident of Peor

The Hebrew *‘al debar* "on the matter of-, in the incident of-" occurs three times in this one verse. The first two times it refers to two differentiated aspects of the incident, but its occurrence a third time appears to be overly repetitive. Quite possibly it represents a scribal error occasioned by the same idiom written just above it. For this reason, the final occurrence of the Hebrew *‘al debar* has been set apart in the translation.

COMMENT 1: THE MESSAGE OF THE BAAL PEOR INCIDENT

In the Introduction to Numbers 1–20 (62–63), and again here, in the Introduction to Numbers 25, attention has been called to the anticlimactic, somewhat depressing effect of reading the Baal Peor incident after Numbers 21–24. Invariably, it clashes with the upbeat message of the Balaam Pericope, and with the account of stunning Israelite victories over the Amorites in Numbers 21. Why is the Baal Peor incident positioned where it is? Was this positioning intended to make a statement to the effect that even the new generation of valiant Israelites was not immune to pagan tendencies? This effect persists, although we realize that the Balaam Pericope represents a major insertion into the narrative, and that Numbers 25:1–5 do not indicate an awareness of its inclusion in Numbers.

In the Introduction to the Book of Numbers (Levine 1993:57–62), the seeming quiescence of the JE narrative on the change of generations was discussed. It was emphasized that we are more or less compelled to conclude that, like the Deuteronomist of Deuteronomy 2:14, the JE narrators timed the end of the wilderness generation to coincide with the arrival of the Israelites at Nahal Zered (Num 21:12). This means that henceforth we are reading about the adventures of the new generation. One thing is certain: In order for the Israelites to have arrived at Abel-Shittim, in the Plains of Moab (Num 22:1), they would have had to make their way through northern Moab. There was no other way to get to the Jordan river, across from Jericho. In turn, this route would have compelled a confrontation with whomever ruled over northern Moab, namely, the region north of the Arnon. In the JE tradition this territory was said to be Amorite territory. Ergo: the Israelites at Abel-Shittim are the victorious Israelites, the new generation, and their sin is, therefore, all the more egregious.

To shed light on the position, and hence the role of the Baal Peor incident in the ongoing narratives of Numbers, we must trace the account of this episode to its source, and view it as a report that was appropriated by the JE historiographers, not as one created by them. An early reference to the Baal Peor incident, one perhaps antecedent to Numbers 25:1–5, occurs in Hosea 9:10, within a passage evoking historical memory. As cryptic as that passage is, it may nevertheless add to our understanding of the positioning of this episode in the Book of Numbers. It reads:

> When I met up with Israel in the wilderness,
> They were [as pleasing] as grapes;

Your fathers seemed to me
Like the first fig to ripen on a fig tree.
Then, they arrived at Baal Peor,
And devoted themselves to the *Baal* (read: *labbaʿal*).
They became abominable creatures,
As they prefer to be!

Note that the tendentious Masoretic reading *labbōšet* "to the shameful one" has been read *labbaʿal* "to the Baal," and so translated. The equation of *Baʿal* and *bōšet* is epitomized in Jeremiah 11:13, and then, too, we have the tendentious renderings of personal names, such as *ʾišbōšet* for *ʾešbaʿal* (cf. 2 Sam 2:8 with 1 Chron 8:33).

The prophet expresses the theme of Israel's first meeting with its God in the wilderness in a way similar to the author of Deuteronomy 32. It is only in these two sources, by the way, that the verb *m-ṣ-ʾ* "to reach, overtake" is used to describe this meeting (cf. Hos 9:10 with Deut 32:10). It would seem that the prophet is speaking of those who, in the schematic chronology of JE, would be identified as the new generation of Israelites. And yet, neither of these sources knows of the tension between the Exodus generation and the following second generation that animates JE, D and P in the Torah traditions. What the authors of both Deuteronomy 32 and Hosea 9 are saying is that something went wrong in the wilderness after a period when all had gone well. In effect, the sequence is reversed. According to the historiographic Torah traditions, the Exodus generation was of little faith, a theme brought out in the narrative of the spies (Num 13–14), and their recalcitrance necessitated delaying the conquest of Canaan until a new generation that had not known slavery would arise. According to Hosea and Deuteronomy 32, the relationship between God and Israel turned sour in the wilderness after a people, lovingly cared for by YHWH and aware of his power, ungratefully turned its back on the Rock that bore him. Thus, Hosea 13:4-6:

Only I, YHWH, have been your God
Ever since the Land of Egypt;
You have never known a God except me,
And there is no savior other than I.
I lovingly cared for you in the wilderness,
In a thirsty land.
When they grazed, they were sated;
But when they became sated, they forgot me.

This passage is preceded in Hosea 13 by a condemnation of Israelite paganism, including the worship of the Baal (Hos 13:1–3), just as in Deuteronomy

32 a condemnation of Israelite paganism follows directly upon the recollection of a prior good relationship with YHWH. There, too, forgetting the true God is what is being emphasized (Deut 32:18), as is YHWH's singularity (Deut 32:12).

It is therefore proposed that the original context of Numbers 25:1–5 is to be sought in the same circles that produced Hosea 9 and Deuteronomy 32, namely, northern Israelite writers of the ninth-to-eighth centuries B.C.E. who retrojected a deterioration in Israel's relationship with its God into the wilderness as a model for what they had seen happen within the religious climate of northern Israel and in the Transjordanian Israelite community. There is also the significance of the hostility toward the Transjordanian Israelite community to be considered in seeking the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the JE account of the Baal Peor incident. From Hosea 12 it would appear that such hostility, although of long duration, was particularly poignant in the mid-to-late eighth century B.C.E. Jeroboam II was the last king of northern Israel capable of holding the kingdom together. After his death in 746 B.C.E., northern Israel lost most of its power, and conflict with the Transjordanian Israelites was intensified. In fact, the last kings of Northern Israel were Transjordanian pretenders, or usurpers—Shallum son of Jabesh, Menahem son of Gadi and his son Pekahiah.

By appropriating earlier accounts about the Baal Peor incident from the Elohist, or from the subsource T (= Transjordanian), the JE historiographers produced an anticlimax, and sent out the message that living in Transjordan leads to idolatry. Inevitably, this message correlates with determining the legitimacy of the Transjordanian Israelite community, a theme explicit in Numbers 32, and one strongly suggested by the entire tone of JE, D and also P (see the Introduction to the Book of Numbers [Levine 1993:73], and the Comments to Numbers 32). These traditions all highlight the event of crossing the Jordan and entering the Promised Land, which is Cisjordan. In Numbers 21, they present the Transjordanian adventures as if related to passing difficulties, or lapses occurring en route. In truth, these textual traditions reflect enduring realities within an Israelite community that lasted about three hundred years, mostly under northern Israelite hegemony. The JE historiographers positioned the Baal Peor incident at a point in their chronology just before the Israelites were poised to cross the Jordan.

COMMENT 2: THE REAL SIN OF BAAL PEOR

If it is correct, as suggested in the Notes, that the larger issue informing the Baal Peor incident is paganism, and the immediate agenda is marriage or attachments such as concubinage to Moabite or other foreign women, then we have a further clue as to the initial *Sitz-im-Leben* of the JE account. Deuteronomy 23:4 forbids the marriage of Israelites with Moabites and Ammonites on the grounds that these nations did not allow the Israelites to pass through their lands, and because they hired Balaam to curse them. As has been argued by Ginsberg (1982) core Deuteronomy harks back to northern Israelite traditions of the mid-eighth century B.C.E. An editorial passage inserted in 1 Kings 11:1–6 indicts Solomon for marrying diverse, foreign wives, including Moabites, making explicit reference to the law of Deuteronomy 23:4. Such marriages induced him to permit or even sponsor pagan worship. Through inner-biblical exegesis the Deuteronomic prohibition is interpreted as working both ways, so as to condemn an Israelite king, like Solomon, who married women of these foreign nations, not only foreign men who married Israelite women. Similar echoes appear in postexilic sources such as Ezra 9:1 and Nehemiah 13:23.

In fact, the hostility of foreign nations, which is the theme of Deuteronomy 23:4, has been replaced in 1 Kings 11 by a frequent theme of the Deuteronomist. It is in Deuteronomy 7:1–6 that we read a major statement of the *ḥērem* theology, calling, among other things, for the destruction of all pagan cult sites in Canaan. Furthermore, Israelites were not to enter into alliances with the specified Canaanite peoples, nor were they to intermarry with them: "Your daughter you shall not give to his son, nor take his daughter for your son" (Deut 7:3). The reasoning is the same as expressed in the indictment of Solomon in 1 Kings 11, or as is implied in the law of the king in Deuteronomy 17:17: Wives, especially foreign ones, such as Phoenician and Egyptian princesses, often led their husbands astray into pagan worship. In less accusatory terms, we would say that the demography of central Transjordan is conducive to religious heterodoxy. How different this mentality is from the spirit of the Book of Ruth that, in recasting the period of the Judges, takes it for granted that at that early time intermarriage between Israelite men and Moabite women was completely acceptable. In spite of the fact that both of Naomi's sons married Moabite women, she is welcomed back to her hometown. What is more, Ruth marries Boaz, and from the descendants of that union emerged David, King of Judah and Israel. Whoever gave us the tale of Ruth at a later time either invented or revived the atmosphere of an earlier period when there was amity between Israel and Moab.

The pivotal verb in Numbers 25:1–5 is *z-n-h,* whose connotations range from actual harlotry and violation of sexual prohibitions to acts of betrayal figuratively associated with marital infidelity and prostitution, and generalized to apply to the people of Israel as a whole. A great deal of the early modern literature on the Baal Peor incident reflects the assumption that Canaanite cults included orgiastic rites, and involved sacred or cultic prostitution. Hence, the verb *z-n-h* in Numbers 25:1 was taken by some to refer to sexual acts which were, in themselves, deemed immoral, like harlotry, incest and adultery, and by extension, homosexuality and anal intercourse. In the same vein, Niphal *nismad* "to be joined to-" was at times understood to refer to sexual, even homosexual, intimacy.

There are two reasons for doubting this line of interpretation as representing the original context of the accounts of the Baal Peor incident. In both the JE and priestly versions of the Baal Peor incident of Numbers 25 there is no indication that the sacrificial rites to which the Moabite (and Midianite) women brought their Israelite men actually involved sexual activity. The elusive suggestiveness of the term *qubbāh,* and the ambiguity of the Hiphil verb, *wayyaqrēb* "he brought near, presented," in the priestly version have stimulated this very line of interpretation. As was shown in Notes to Numbers 25, neither version requires us to conclude that here the verb *z-n-h* means: "to commit harlotry," or that Niphal *niṣmad* indicates sexual contact as a feature of the cult of Baal Peor.

The Baal Peor episode has figured in the debate on the presence or extent of sacred prostitution in biblical Israel, and in the ancient Near East, generally, especially among Israel's neighbors. Recent studies, especially those by M. Gruber (1983, 1986) dealing with the *qādēš* and the *qedēšah̄,* have shown that these are, in the first instance, terms for foreign priests and priestesses that only occasionally intersect with terms for prostitutes. In discussing sacred prostitution, K. van der Toorn (1989) has shown that there is little evidence for the currency of orgiastic cults in the West Semitic sphere during biblical times, before the advent of Hellenism, or, for that matter, in Mesopotamia. It is likely that priestesses of various ranks at times engaged in such activity, and contributed their income to temples. Priestesses were also known to have children out of wedlock, and there is evidence of male prostitution as well. However, none of this activity seems to have been part of the proper functions of cultic personnel. It would grossly distort the character of the sacred marriage (*hieros gamos*) of the Mesopotamian temples to regard it as licentious.

Nor, as has been alleged, do the inner-biblical references to the Baal Peor incident validate the orgiastic interpretation. In Hosea (9:10), cited above, which may be earlier than the JE narrative of Numbers 25 itself, there are admitted ambiguities, but none to compel reference to an orgiastic cult. We read that at Baal Peor the Israelites "devoted themselves," an act conveyed by the Niphal *wayyinnāzerû,* which means pretty much what *wayyiṣṣāmed* means in Numbers 25:3. In fact, both connote essentially the same cultic relationship, one of adherence and commitment. In so doing, the Israelites became as *šiqqûṣim,* a term designating abominable beings, objects or creatures, which belongs to the biblical vocabulary descriptive of paganism. While the root *š-q-ṣ* may convey the sense of impurity, it expresses no sexual connotation per se (1 Kings 11:5, 7, Lev 11:11). As for *bōšet* "shame," it is in Hosea 9:10 merely a tendentious change for *baʿal,* as has been noted above. It would surely be reading too much into *keʾohabām* of Hosea 9:10, which is translated "which they love, prefer," to see in this verbal form a reference to sexual activity, as if to say: "They became devoted to Baal through lovemaking."

A survey of the remaining references to the Baal Peor incident reinforces the conclusion that they bear no orgiastic innuendo. The Deuteronomist (in Deut 4:3) clearly focuses on cultic deviation: "Your very eyes beheld what YHWH wrought against Baal Peor. For every person who went astray after Baal Peor (*'ăšer hālak 'aḥarê Ba'al Pe'ôr*), YHWH, your God, destroyed him from your midst. But you, who are adherent (*haddebēkîm*) to YHWH, your God, are all of you alive today." In this formulation, where the verb *h-l-k* apparently substitutes for *z-n-h*, any sexual connotation is effectively eliminated.

The priestly statement of Numbers 31:16 deals with the disposition of the Midianite women after Israel's defeat of the Midianites in a war. The stated rule is that all women who had sexual relations with a man were to be killed, with only virgins allowed to live. In an ancient Near Eastern context, this means that, in effect, only unmarried women or those never attached to men as concubines would be left alive. It is explained that the Midianite women who had been with men were among those who perpetrated *ma'al* against YHWH in the Baal Peor incident. Hebrew *ma'al* is a priestly category that includes sexual misconduct, such as marital infidelity (Num 5:6, 12, 27), but it more generally refers to other forms of betrayal and fraud. Both the theme and diction of Numbers 31:13–20 are echoed in Judges 21:10–11, 13–14, 16, all interpolations within the record of an internecine war with the Benjaminites. Once again, the context is marriage, and, in fact, one is impressed with the similarity in tone between that account and the record of the Baal Peor incident. Finally, the reference to the Baal Peor incident in Joshua 22:17, part of an excursus on the legitimacy of Israelite worship in Transjordan (Jos 22:13–34), defines *ma'al* as religious and national betrayal. In fact, the term *ma'al* is used synonymously were *mered* "rebellion" in Joshua 22:22.

It is well known that later Jewish and Christian interpretation read into the accounts of the Baal Peor episode all sorts of sexual implications (L. Ginzberg 1947, III:370). The persistence of such traditions recommends caution before we reject the orgiastic interpretation out of hand, as does the weight of modern scholarship that favors the sexual interpretation. It was in response to that approach that so much space has been devoted here to presenting an alternative view.

COMMENT 3: SELECTIVITY IN THE DESCENT OF THE AARONIDE PRIESTHOOD

Running like a thread through the priestly source within Torah literature, from Exodus, via Leviticus, to Numbers, is an etiological theme endorsing the antiquity of the Aaronide priesthood, in general, and tracing the selective transmission of priestly authority within the family of Aaron itself. In fact, this theme generated a priestly gloss in Deuteronomy 10:6b informing the reader that Eleazar succeeded Aaron (see further). Numbers 25:10–15 serve as a link in this chain. The chain of authority begins with the priestly genealogy of Exodus 6:14–28 (cf. Exod 29:9), in which we read that Aaron had four sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar (Exod 6:23). Significantly, two verses later (Exod 6:25), we read that Eleazar, son of Aaron, had one son, named Phinehas. There is no mention of Ithamar, or of Aaron's other two sons, in Exodus 6:23 and following, thereby indicating that this genealogy endorses the succession of the chief priesthood through Eleazar specifically.

Clearly, priestly authors and redactors interposed significant messages throughout their writings, primarily in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, so that literary sequence does not always correspond to the formation of traditions. Thus it is that two of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, are eliminated from consideration in Leviticus 10:1–7, where we read of their death at the hands of God for a cultic offense. This left Eleazar and Ithamar (see Num 3:1–4). In effect, what was already implicit in the genealogy of Exodus 6 was explicated, as if for the first time, in Leviticus 10. In some priestly sources we read more of Ithamar, who seems to be holding his own, at least for a while. Thus, according to Exodus 38:21, Ithamar is in charge of the Levites working on the construction of the Tabernacle, and in Numbers 4:28, 34, the assignments of the Gershonites and Merarites are entrusted to Ithamar, whereas Eleazar is put in charge of the Kohathites (Num 3:32, 4:16). But, since the Kohathites are the most prominent Levitical clan in the scheme of Numbers 3–4, these very assignments, and the fact that Eleazar is designated *neśîʾ neśîʾê hallēwî* "the chief of the Levitical chieftains" in Numbers 3:32, indicates that Eleazar is favored.

In fact, we hear nothing more of Ithamar in Numbers, except in the census of Numbers 26, where his birth to Aaron is routinely registered. The line of Eleazar has been emphatically selected, and in Numbers 20:22–29, at the death of Aaron, Moses invests Eleazar as his father's successor. Even prior to this event, the sequence of the priestly narratives of Numbers had already made Eleazar the lead actor. He disposes of the copper pans in the aftermath of the Korah episode (Num 17:1–5), and he officiates at the purification rites of the so-called red heifer, both of which, at least in literary sequence, precede Aaron's death. After Aaron's death, Eleazar is consistently identified as the chief priest (Numbers 27, 31), and leader of the people along with Joshua, son of Nun (Num 32:28, 34:17). In Numbers 25:10–15, this line of succession is reinforced in anticipation, by endorsing Phinehas, Eleazar's son, as his heir apparent. Aspects of the Aaronide succession have been discussed in the Comments on Numbers 3–4 about the assignments and projected organization of the Levitical clans (Levine 1993:171–178), in the Comments on Numbers 8 about the history of the Levites (Levine 1993:279–290), and in the Comments on Numbers 16–17 on the subject of the internecine struggle within the tribe of Levi over the priestly mandate (Levine 1993:428–432).

Propp (1992, in *ABD* III:579–581) has pointed to a way of synthesizing the priestly source in Torah literature with the traditions of Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles. He explains how the Aaronide tradition was grafted onto the more likely to be historical record of the Zadokite priesthood. Thus, the priestly leader, Ezra, is first introduced by citing his genealogy (Ezra 7:1–6). He is descended from Zadok (Ezra 7:2), whose lineage is then fused with Aaron's as we move back through the generations: "-son of Abishua, son of Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, the chief priest" (Ezra 7:5). In other words, the Zadokite lineage of the chief-priesthood that, in the historical books of the Bible, derives from the time of David, and is in no way related to the tribe of Levi, is traced back to the time of Moses by joining it to the line of Aaron. The Zadokite priesthood is still being endorsed in Ezekiel 44, in itself quite probably an exilic or postexilic source, where there is no mention of an Aaronide priesthood. It is also likely that Malachi 2 knows nothing of an Aaronide priestly line. Malachi 2:4–6 is directly relevant to determining how Numbers 25:10–15 fit into the traditional history of the Aaronide priesthood because of the dictional connections between the two texts. There we read:

> Know, then, that I have sent this charge to you that my covenant with Levi may endure—said YHWH of hosts. I had with him a covenant of life and fellowship (*berîtî hāyetāh ʾittô haḥayim wehaṣṣālôm),* and I granted these to him (*wāʾettenēm lô)* . . . He served me with complete loyalty, and held the multitude back from iniquity (*werabbîm hēšîb mēʿāwôn;* Mal 2:4–6, with deletions).

Apart from the several occurrences of *berît* "covenant" in both sources, Numbers 25 and Malachi 2, and the particularly poignant resonance of *šālôm* "fellowship," there is also the common theme of priests in positions of leadership who prevent sinfulness among the Israelites. Compare *hēšîb mēʿāwôn* "held back from iniquity" in Malachi 2:6 with hēšîb *ʾet ḥamātî* "held back my wrath" in Numbers 25:11. It could be argued that Numbers 25:10–15 take their cue from Malachi 2, where there is, however, no mention of the Aaronide priesthood. It seems likely, therefore, that the entire notion of an Aaronide priesthood is a postexilic one, epitomized in the fusion of the Zadokite priesthood with that of Aaron, a fusion heralded by Ezra's genealogy as it is presented in Ezra 7:1–7.

To return to the lineage of Phinehas, and to the ascendancy of Eleazar over Ithamar in priestly tradition, we note that 1 Chronicles 24, in speaking of the priestly "watches, tours of duty" (*mišmārôt*), records that Eleazar and Ithamar served as priests after their brothers, Nadab and Abihu, had died. Reflecting the fusion of the Aaronide and Zadokite lines, known Ezra 7:1–7, 1 Chronicles 24:1–5 tell how Zadok, one of Eleazar's descendants, and Ahimelek, one of Ithamar's descendants, apportioned the watches between the two houses. The men of Eleazar's family were more numerous, so they took sixteen watches, and the men of Ithamar's family took the remaining eight watches.

In summary, Numbers 25:10–15, like some other priestly traditions of Numbers, correlate with postexilic sources relating to the Israelite priesthood, beginning with Malachi 2, and continuing through to 1 Chronicles 24 and Ezra 7. It remains unclear why Eleazar was favored over Ithamar, unless, as Propp suggests, Ithamar was identified by the Chronicler as Abiathar, the priest ultimately rejected by David. This may be inferred from a comparison of 1 Chronicles 24:3 with 1 Chronicles 24:6. In the former, Ahimelek is one of the descendants of Ithamar, and in the latter, he is the son of Abiathar. This is hardly conclusive, however, because Chronicles is heavily redacted, and it is far from certain that the two verses, though close to each other in the text, derive from the same source. More likely, the selective pattern so typical of biblical traditions was at work to elect one line and reject the other.

COMMENT 4:
RETRIBUTION AND EXPIATION THROUGH THE DEATH OF THE OFFENDERS

The distinctive language of Numbers 25:1–5 inevitably recalls the only other incident where the verb *hoqiʿa* "to impale" is employed. Reference is to the impaling of the descendants of Saul by the Gibeonites. In 2 Samuel 21, we read that a famine plagued the land for three years. It was explained to David that this was in punishment for a grievous act committed by Saul, David's predecessor. Saul had violated a treaty, taken under oath, with the Gibeonites guaranteeing them life, and thereby exempting them from the fate of the other Canaanite peoples (Jos 9). Saul had improperly put some of the Gibeonites to death. In retribution, the Gibeonites demanded that seven descendants of Saul be put to death, a demand to which David acceded. Here is how the Gibeonites formulated their demand:

> Let seven of his descendants be remanded to us, and we will impale them to YHWH (*wehôqaʿanûm le-YHWH*) in Gibeah of Saul, the chosen of YHWH (LXX: "at Gibeon, on the mountain of YHWH"—2 Sam 21:6).

This was done:

> And he handed them over to the Gibeonites who impaled them (*wayyōq̂iʿûm*) on the mountain in the presence of YHWH (2 Sam 21:9).

In the recounting of both episodes there is the strong suggestion of human sacrifice aimed at assuaging divine wrath. The enigmatic account of the Moabite king who sacrificed his son and royal heir in the heat of battle (2 Kings 3:27) is also relevant to the interpretation of Numbers 25 and 2 Samuel 21 notwithstanding certain differences. In 2 Kings 3, the word for divine wrath is *qeṣep* "rage," whereas in Numbers 25 it is *ḥārôn ʾap* "flaring of the nostrils, wrath," but the phenomenology is the same: It is the extreme sacrifice, the sacrifice of a human being, that affects the deity. The deity finds such a sacrifice irresistible. In that episode, sacrifice secures victory and the routing of the enemy, whereas in the Baal Peor incident of Numbers 25 it secures expiation.

The similarities of diction between sources reporting on the expiation of paganism at Baal Peor, on the one hand, and the retribution of the Gibeonites, on the other, might imply that both involved treaty violation, broadly defined to include covenant violation. That is to say, the author of Numbers 25:1–5 in his specification of the penalty of impalement, and by his use of the rare verb *hôqîʿa,* was writing against the background of one or more of the several prohibitions of pagan worship in Torah literature. Thus, Exodus 22:19, from the Book of the Covenant: "One offering sacrifice to any deity will be proscribed (*zōbēaḥ lĕʾlōhîm yoḥorām)*, except to YHWH, alone." Use of the verb *ḥ-r-m*, recalling the *ḥērem*, connotes capital punishment, as well as other penalties. Similarly, we read in Numbers 25:2 that the Israelites prostrated themselves (*wayyištaḥawû)* before the god, or gods of the Moabites. This, in turn, resonates the language of the Decalogue: "Do not prostrate yourselves to them (*lōʾ tištaḥaweh lāhem),* nor worship them" (Exod 20:5, Deut 5:9).

Particularly instructive is the excursus in 2 Kings 17:35–39, which warrants partial citation here:

> YHWH enacted a covenant (*berît*) with them (= the sons of Jacob/Israel) and he commanded them as follows: Do not fear other gods; do not prostrate yourselves to them, nor worship them, nor offer sacrifice to them (2 Kings 17:35).

Throughout this statement, the theme of covenant is reinforced, as well as the sin of pagan worship expressed as prostration, worship and offering sacrifice. It would not be reading too much into Numbers 25:1–5 to conclude that the author of this passage perceived of the lapse into paganism at Baal Peor as a violation of Israel's covenant with YHWH, punishable by death. Note that the sentence of impalement is rendered by YHWH through Moses, whereas it is Moses on his own who orders the *šōpeṭîm* to slay those of their own people who lapsed into pagaism. Both of these sentences would appear to have been perceived as judicial in sanction, and executed in accordance with the terms of Israel's covenant with YHWH. In the priestly version, Phinehas' zealous act cannot be interpreted in quite the same way. It accords more closely with the priestly emphasis on divine wrath, lashing out at the Israelites with a plaque. This motif is brought out in 2 Samuel 24, an account composed in the spirit of priestly literature. In that narrative, it was the building of an altar to YHWH that brought a halt to a god-sent plague, whereas in the Baal Peor story, according to the priestly version, it was the killing of the prime offenders, themselves, which expiated for the sin that had enraged YHWH and contained the plague.

Without being too literal about this report, its impact is horrendous in the light of the etiological function it has in the ongoing narrative. Phinehas' act is not only praised, but it is made the basis for his selection as the heir to the Aaronide chief priesthood. The message is that the chosen priest is the one who takes up his sword in defense of his God, and assuages his wrath by putting the offenders to death. One wonders what historical reality generated such an evaluation. It is striking that YHWH's covenant with the Eleazarite line through Phinehas is termed as a covenant of fellowship, epitomized by the term *salom*, which inevitably clashes with the violent zeal of Phinehas.

As for the punitive aspect of the priestly version, we are reminded of certain Deuteronomic policies on paganism. Deuteronomy 17:2–7 ordains a judicial process for dealing with an Israelite discovered worshipping foreign gods. He is to be stoned to death outside the gate on the testimony of a minimum of two witnesses. Of putative significance is the procedure whereby the witnesses cast the first stone: "The hand of the witnesses shall be cast against him first off, to kill him, and the hand of all the people, subsequently, and so you shall excise the evil from your midst." But, when we read the provisions of Deuteronomy 13:7–19, we observe a different disposition of essentially the same situation: When a member of one's family or a neighbor incites an Israelite to paganism, he is not to accede to this persuasion, but rather to kill the inciter without compassion: "Your hand shall be cast against him first off, to kill him, and the hand of the entire people, subsequently" (Deut 13:10). In the continuation of the passage, we are told that when the Israelites hear a report of a whole town that has gone astray, the report is to be thoroughly investigated. If it is found to be true, the town is to be razed to the ground, and its residents all put to death without mercy. This is an instance of full *ḥērem*.

Now, the situation faced by Phinehas resembles both Deuteronomy 17:2–7 and Deuteronomy 13:7–19, but its disposition decidedly leans toward the latter, especially the law regarding one Israelite who incites his family or neighbors to acts of paganism. The clear implication is that an Israelite may take matters into his own hands and put the offender to death. Whereas Deuteronomy 13:7–12 speak of one's Israelite wife, presumably, or one's own son or daughter, it is not difficult to see how a priestly writer might have skewed this Deuteronomic law to apply to foreign women, who were, like "the wife of your bosom" (*'ēsĕt ḥêqekā*) of Deuteronomy 13:7, in a position to tempt a man to worship foreign gods. In its complete form, the account of the Baal Peor incident conveys a plethora of messages and utilizes all sorts of appropriated themes. In the larger context of Numbers, its principal message is that just as the Israelites brought their unique religion with them to Canaan, they also had been made aware, before entering the Promised Land, of its unique challenge: Unlike other peoples, they dared not tolerate the worship of other gods.

PART IV.

NUMBERS 26: THE SECOND WILDERNESS CENSUS

◆

INTRODUCTION

Numbers 26 presents the second census of the Wilderness Period, the first having been encountered in Numbers 1. The earlier census is actually referred to in Numbers 26:64, which states that no person counted in the first census remained alive for the second, at the conclusion of the Wilderness Period, except for Caleb and Joshua. What is more, the musters of the tribe of Levi, recorded in full in Numbers 3:14–34, are summarized in Numbers 26:57–62. Gray (Gray-*ICC*:387–388) notes that the clan names given in Numbers 26 generally correlate with the names registered in Genesis 46:8–27, a priestly list of those who went down to Egypt, and, to a lesser extent, correspond to the names listed in Exodus 6:14–28, an adumbrated register of the patriarchal clans of the Israelites in Egypt. The Exodus list stops at Levi, at which point it zooms in on the Kohathite clan of Moses and Aaron. Also of considerable relevance are the genealogies provided in 1 Chronicles 2–9, and Joshua 12–19 likewise contain relevant information on the territories allotted to the tribes of Israel, east and west of the Jordan. A full comparison and contrast of the relevant priestly and other records will be reserved for the Comments. The Notes will be limited primarily to outlining and explaining the contents of Numbers 26 itself.

In literary context, the obvious function of the second census is to update the former one. This function is implied in Numbers 26:4b, the actual title of the present record: "The descendants of the Israelites who came out of the land of Egypt," which is to say, that it is a muster of the descendants of those Israelites who had left Egypt some forty years earlier, and who had since passed away. The second census came at a time when the next generation was poised to cross the Jordan into the Promised Land.

A census is normally forward looking; it is conducted before embarking on a military campaign, or a protracted migration, so as to take account of available human resources. At the same time, a census recapitulates recent history, effectively summarizing changes occurring since the last accounting was made. As regards Numbers 26, the demographics of the census were also to serve as a basis for the apportionment of the land to the various tribes according to their respective populations. And so Numbers 26 addresses three interlocking agendas: It documents the fulfillment of the decree that the generation of the Exodus would not survive the Wilderness Period, it musters the available human resources for the conquest and settlement of Canaan, and it provides a basis for the apportionment of the land.

Milgrom (1990:220) presents a table comparing the totals of Numbers 1 with those of Numbers 26. It will be argued in the Comments that Numbers 1 is actually a reflex of Numbers 26. If correct, this means that the author of Numbers 1 sought to lay a foundation for the ascendancy of the tribe of Manasseh (up from 32,200 to 52,700), and the decline of the tribe of Simeon (down from 59,300 to 22,200). These changes have significant implications, because the tribal traditions of Numbers are central to the interpretation of the book as a whole.

It is only to be expected that the present census record would pursue the generational progression of the tribes and clans through the Wilderness Period, albeit to inconsistent extents, providing information on the formative clans (conveyed by the term *mišpāḥāh*) within each eponymic tribe. Logically, and in contrast, the census of Numbers 1 had listed only the tribal totals without a breakdown into clans, although the Levitical census of Numbers 3:14–34 goes into such detail with respect to the tribe of Levi in a manner similar to Numbers 26, suggesting that it, too, describes a more advanced development. The function of the earlier census preserved in Numbers 1 was overtly organizational, thus making it important to list the *neśîʾîm* "tribal chieftains" of the twelve tribes, whereas the program for apportioning the Promised Land, basic to Numbers 26, lends revelance to recording the precise populations of the respective clans within each tribe.

One also notes occasional asides in Numbers 26, most probably glosses, that add tangential information. Examples are Numbers 26:8b–10 on the descendants of Eliab, who, along with Korah, had agitated against Moses and perished on that account. Similarly, Numbers 26:33 comments that Zelophehad, son of Hepher, of the tribe of Manasseh, had no sons, but only daughters, whose names are then listed. One could also include Numbers 26:61 in this category of glosses, since it explains how it was that Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, had died. The sections on the census of Levi, as well as the summary (Num 26:57–65) are likewise characterized by explanatory embellishments, intended to integrate the census into the larger, priestly agenda of Numbers.

The contents of Numbers 26 may be outlined as follows:

1) Numbers 26:1b–4a—A prescriptive introductory section, in which YHWH orders Moses and Aaron's son, Eleazar, his successor as chief priest, to conduct a census in the Plains of Moab of all male Israelites twenty years of age and above, those eligible for military conscription.
2) Numbers 26:4b–51—The record of the musters of all of the tribes of Israel by their clans, totaling 601,730.
3) Numbers 26:52–56—The pursuant order to Moses to apportion the land by lot to the tribes, with each tribe receiving a territory commensurate with its population.
4) Numbers 26:57–62—The separate census of the Levites, who were not to receive a territory in the land.
5) Numbers 26:63–65—A summary statement recording that the census had been carried out as ordered. An additional note mentions that, as

foretold in Numbers 14:26–45, no person had lived to enter the Promised Land, except Caleb and Joshua.

TRANSLATION

26 [1b]Then YHWH said to Moses and to Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, as follows:

[2]Take a head count of the entire Israelite community, from twenty years of age and above, by their patriarchal "houses," everyone who is eligible for military service among the Israelites.

[3]Then Moses and Eleazar, the priest, issued those (instructions) in the Plains of Moab, at the Jordan near Jericho, as follows:

[4]"Those twenty years of age and above, as YHWH commanded Moses."

The descendants of the Israelites who came out of the land of Egypt were:

[5]Reuben, the firstborn of Israel. Descendants of Reuben: [Affiliated with] Enoch—the Enochite clan. Affiliated with Pallu—the Palluite clan.

[6]Affiliated with Hezron—the Hezronite clan. Affiliated with Carmi—the Carmite clan.

[7]These are the Reubenite clans. Their musters numbered 43,730.

[8]Descendants of Pallu: Eliab.

[9]Descendants of Eliab: Nemuel and Dathan and Abiram (the same Dathan and Abiram, the elect of the community, who agitated against Moses and against Aaron in league with the faction of Korah, when those agitated against YHWH).

[10](Then the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, together with Korah, as that faction perished; when fire consumed the two-hundred fifty men. They became a symbol.)

[11](The sons of Korah did not die, however.)

[12]Descendants of Simeon, by their clans: Affiliated with Nemuel—the Nemuelite clan. Affiliated with Yamin—the Yaminite clan. Affiliated with Yachin—the Yachinite clan.

[13]Affiliated with Zerah—the Zerahite clan. Affiliated with Saul—the Saulite clan.

[14]These are the Simeonite clans—22,200.

[15]Descendants of Gad, by the clans: Affiliated with Zephon, the Zephonite clan. Affiliated with Haggi—the Haggite clan. Affiliated with Shuni—the Shunite clan.

[16]Affiliated with Ozni—the Oznite clan. Affilaited with Er—the Erite clan.

[17]Affiliated with Arod—the Arodite clan. Affiliated with Areli—the Arelite clan.

[18]These are the Gadite clans by their musters, numbering 40,500.

[19]Descendants of Judah: Er and Onan. (Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan.)

[20]Remaining descendants of Judah by their clans: Affiliated with Shelah—the Shelanite clan. Affiliated with Perez—the Perezite clan. Affiliated with Zerah—the Zerahite clan.

[21]Descendants of Perez: Affiliated with Hezron—the Hezronite clan. Affiliated with Hamul—the Hamulite clan.

[22]These are the Judahite clans by their musters, numbering 76,500.

[23]Descendants of Issachar by their clans: Affiliated with Tola—the Tolaite clan. Affiliated with Puvah—the Punite clan.

[24]Affiliated with Yashub—the Yashubite clan. Affiliated with Shimron—the Shimronite clan.

[25]These are the Issacharite clans, Their musters: 64,300.

[26]Descendants of Zebulun, by their clans: Affiliated with Sered—the Seredite clan. Affiliated with Elon—the Elonite clan. Affiliated with Jahleel—the Jahleelite clan.

[27]These are the Zebulunite clans by their musters, numbering 60,500.

[28]Descendants of Joseph, by their clans: Manasseh and Ephraim.

[29]Descendants of Manasseh: Affiliated with Machir—the Machirite clan. Machir begat Gilead. Affiliated with Gilead—the Gileadite clans.

[30]These are the descendants of Gilead: Affiliated with Abiezer—the Abiezerite clan. Affiliated with Helek—the Helekite clan.

[31]Affiliated with Asriel—the Asrielite clan. Affiliated with Shechem—the Shechemite clan.

[32]Affiliated with Shemida—the Shemidaite clan. Affiliated with Hepher—the Hepherite clan.

[33](But Zelophehad, son of Hepher, had no sons, but only daughters. The names of Zelophehad's daughters were: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah.)

[34]These are the clans of Manasseh. Their musters numbered 52,700.

[35]These are the descendants of Ephraim by their clans: Affiliated with Shuthelah—the Shuthelahite clan. Affiliated with Becher—the Becherite clan. Affiliated with Tahan—the Tahanite clan.

[36]These are the descendants of Shuthelah: Affiliated with Eran—the Eranite clan.

[37]These are the Ephraimite clans by their muster, numbering 32,500. These are the descendants of Joseph by their clans.

[38]Descendants of Benjamin by their clans: Affiliated with Bela—the Belaite clan. Affiliated with Ashbel—the Ashbelite clan. Affiliated with Ahiram—the Ahiramite clan.

[39]Affiliated with Shephupham—the Shephuphamite clan. Affiliated with Hupham—the Huphamite clan.

[40]The descendants of Bela were Ard and Naaman. Affiliated with Ard—the Ardite clan. Affiliated with Naaman—the Naamanite clan.

[41]These are the descendants of Benjamin by their clans. Their muster numbered 45,600.

[42]These are the descendants of Dan by their clans: Affiliated with Shuham—the Shuhamite clan. These are the clans of Dan.

[43]The muster of the Shuhamite clan numbered 64,400.

[44]Descendants of Asher by their clans: Affiliated with Imnah—the Imnahite clan. Affiliated with Ishvi—the Ishvite clan. Affiliated with Beriah—the Beriite clan.

[45]Affiliated with the descendants of Beriah: Affiliated with Heber—the Heberite clan. Affiliated with Malchiel—the Malchielite clan.

[46]The name of Asher's daughter was Serah.

[47]These are the clans of the descendants of Asher by their muster, numbering 53,400.

[48]Descendants of Naphtali by their clans: Affiliated with Jahzeel—the Jahzeelite clan. Affiliated with Guni—the Gunite clan.

[49]Affiliated with Jezer—the Jezerite clan. Affiliated with Shillem—the Shillemite clan.

[50]These are the clans of the Naphtalites, clan by clan. Their muster numbered 45,400.

[51]These are musters of the Israelite people, numbering 601,730.

[52]Then YHWH spoke to Moses as follows:

[53]To the above shall the land be allotted as territories, in proportion to the number of names.

[54]To the more numerous shall you increase his territory, and to the less numerous—decrease his territory. Each shall be granted his territory in accordance with his musters.

[55]Moreover, it is by lot that the land shall be apportioned. All shall receive territories registered to the names of their patriarchal tribes.

[56]By order of the lot shall everyone's territory be apportioned, whether more numerous or less numerous.

[57]These are the musters of the Levitical tribe by their clans: Affiliated with Gershon—the Gershonite clan. Affiliated with Kohath—the Kohathite clan. Affiliated with Merari—the Merarite clan.

[58]These are the clans of Levi. The Libnite clan, the Hebronite clan, the Mahlite, the Mushite clan, the Korahite clan. Kohath was the father of Amram.

[59]The name of Amram's wife was Jochebed, daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt. She bore to Amram Aaron, Moses, and Miriam, their sister.

[60]There were born to Aaron: Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar.

[61]Nadab and Abihu died as they were presenting a despised incense offering in the presence of YHWH.

[62]Their muster numbered 23,000, including all males one month of age and above. For they had not been mustered together with the Israelite people, for no territory had been granted to them among the Israelite people.

[63]These are the musters taken by Moses and Eleazar, the priest, who took a census of the Israelite people in the Plains of Moab, across the river from Jericho.

[64]Among these there was no person remaining from the musters taken by Moses and Aaron, the priest, who took a census of the Israelite people in the wilderness of Sinai.

[65]For YHWH had said of them that they would surely die in the wilderness, and (indeed), not a single person of them survived, except for Caleb, son of Jephunneh and Joshua, son of Nun.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 26:1b–4: THE SECOND CENSUS

26:1b *and to Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest.* The command came to Moses and to Aaron's son, Eleazar, who had already succeeded to the priesthood at his father's death (Num 20:22–29). Eleazar joins Moses in carrying out the census (Num 26:3, 63), and the daughters of Zelophehad appear before both Moses and Eleazar in Numbers 27:2. In fact, Eleazar's own son, Phinehas, had already assumed a role in the priesthood, as indicated by the priestly narrative of Numbers 25:7–13 (cf. Exod 6:25).

2. *Take a head count.* The order to take the census resonates with Numbers 1:2–3, especially in its use of idiomatic *nāśāʾ rōʾš* "to lift the head," namely, take a poll, and by its stipulation that all those twenty years and above, who were eligible for military service, be mustered. See the Notes to Numbers 1:2–3 in Levine 1993:130–135, for a discussion of such terms as *ʿēdāh* "community," *bêt ʾābôt* "patriarchal 'house,'" *mišpāḥāh* "clan," and *yōṣēʾ ṣābāʾ* "eligible for military service." It is there that the structure of the tribe, as envisioned in priestly Torah literature, is analyzed.

3–4. The wording and syntax of Numbers 26:3–4 are problematic on several accounts. There is, first of all, the problem of Masoretic *wayyedabbēr ʾōtām*, which would mean "He set, or determined them," not simply "He spoke them." Here, it remains unclear what the antecedent of "them" is. One could take *ʾōtām* as "to them," an alternative to *ʿalêhem*, namely, to the Israelites, but this would be odd. Analogy makes it more likely that *ʾōtām* functions as a declined pronoun in the accusative, referring to what had been commanded.

Cf. Genesis 21:2: *lammôʿēd ʾašer dibbēr ʾōtô ʾelōhîm* "at the set time that God had determined," where the antecedent of *ʾōtô* "it" is *môʿēd* "set time." Gray (Gray-*ICC*:389–390) suggests reading *ʾittām* "with them," as we find in Genesis 17:23, 35:13–15, thereby yielding: "Then Moses and Eleazar, the priest, spoke *with them,*" namely, with the Israelites. This is the simplest solution, though not a fully satisfactory one.

from twenty years of age and above

The rather abrupt repetition of this phrase, at the beginning of Numbers 26:4a, leaves the impression that a clause, now missing from the text, might have preceded this stipulation. Such elliptical statements are not unprecedented, however, and in the present case one could take the phrase in question as a quotation, cited for emphasis, which is how it has been translated.

A more serious problem arising from the Masoretic version of Numbers 26:3–4 has to do with the actual understanding of these verses. The Masoretes and some of their predecessors took Numbers 26:4 to mean: "—as YHWH had commanded Moses and the Israelites (*ʾet Mōšeh ûbenê Yiśrāʾēl*) who came out of Egypt." In other words, both Moses and the Israelites are the objects of the command, and reference is to the generation of the Exodus, not to the current generation. We would have expected the accusative particle *ʾet* before *benê Yiśrāʾēl,* but this is not a major difficulty in itself. The point is that taken as the Masoretes took it, this verse links the present census to the original command issued in Numbers 1:2–3, soon after the Exodus; more specifically, to the requirement of mustering all who were twenty years of age and above, as originally stated in Numbers 1:3, and now repeated in the preceding verse, Numbers 26:2. This is not the intent of the statement, however.

The descendants of the Israelites who came out of the land of Egypt were

Gray (Gray-*ICC*:387) was correct in regarding Numbers 26:4b as the caption or title of the census record itself. It is, after all, preceded by the conventional compliance formula, *kaʾašer ṣiwwāh* YHWH *ʾet Mōšeh* "as YHWH commanded Moses," which normally signifies closure. One would, therefore, expect a break after Numbers 26:4a, leaving the caption to stand on its own.

In situ, such a reading would require us to attribute to conventional *benê Yiśrāʾēl* a special nuance. It would not mean "Israelites," but rather "the sons, descendants of the Israelites." One could also translate: "And the descendants of Israel (= Jacob) who came out of Egypt." Cf. *benê Yehûdāh* "the descendants of Judah" in Joshua 14:6, and *maṭṭēh benê Yehûdāh* "the tribe of the descendants of Judah" in Joshua 15:1, 20, and the similar classification of other tribes in Joshua 13–19. In either case, we would be called upon to accept the independent sense of *bēn, benê* as "sons, descendants" of a founding father, a sense actually characteristic of genealogical lists, such as Numbers 26:5, just below. In other words, we would have to conclude that the generalized sense "Israelites" for the bound form *bene Yiśrāʾēl* had given way to a more specialized connotation. And so, one could sustain the Masoretic Text, but merely understand it differently by dividing Numbers 26:4 in two, so that verse 4b emerges as the caption of the actual census record, whose listings begin in Numbers 26:5.

A more radical solution of the problems in Numbers 26:3–4 would assume that the Masoretic Text incorporates tendentious changes. Gray (Gray-*ICC*:389–390), following earlier suggestions, proposes substituting *wayyipqōd* "He mustered" in place of *wayyedabbēr* "He spoke" at the beginning of Numbers 26:3, and omitting *lē'mōr* "saying, as follows" at its conclusion. It is interesting that the Peshitta omits *lē'mōr* at the end of verse 3, and adds *ûpeqad Mōšeh* "Moses mustered" at the beginning of verse 4.

The interpolation by the Peshitta, as well as the proposed emendation, would be in line with the statement of recapitulation in Numbers 26:63, which actually employs the verb *pāqad*. Also compare usage of the verb *pāqad* in similar contexts, as in Numbers 1:44, 3:16, 39, 42, and especially in Numbers 4:34: *wayyipqōd Mōšeh we-'Aharôn* "Then Moses and Aaron mustered." As for the word *lē'mōr* "saying, as follows," it may have been added once the meaning of the original text had been skewed in a particular way. Conceivably, then, an earlier version of Numbers 26:3–4 may have read as follows:

> *wayyipqōd Mōšeh we-'El'āzār hakkōhēn 'ōtām be'arbōt Mô'āb 'al Yardēn Yerēhô >lē'mōr< mibben 'eśrîm šānāh wāma'alāh ka'ašer ṣiwwāh YHWH 'et Mōšeh.*
>
> *ûbenê Yiśrā'ēl hayyōṣe'îm mē'ereṣ Miṣrayîm:*
>
> Then Moses and Eleazar the priest mustered them in the Plains of Moab, across the Jordan from Jericho >as follows< from twenty years of age and above, as YHWH commanded Moses.
>
> The descendants of the Israelites who came out of Egypt were:

The question remains as to why so much effort was invested in rearranging and emending the prescriptive introduction, if indeed this is what occurred. The result would seem to indicate that the Masoretic Text derives authority for the present census from the original one, ordained in Numbers 1. Perhaps the compliance formula *ka'ašer ṣiwwāh YHWH 'et Mōšeh* "as YHWH commanded Moses" implied to later priestly writers what it did to the even later Sages, who, whenever they encountered it, customarily inquired: *wehêkān ṣiwwāh* "And where did He (formerly) issue the command?" Invariably, the Sages would cite an antecedent Torah text, suggesting that God had earlier commanded Moses to perform the relevant acts, a commandment now being fulfilled. In the present case, such hermeneutic would point to the beginning of the Wilderness Period, namely, to Numbers 1. This is somewhat ironic, because it will be proposed in the Comments that, in fact, Numbers 26 (more precisely Num 26:4b–51), had been shifted from the beginning of the Book of Numbers to its present position corresponding to the end of the Wilderness Period.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 26:5–51: THE GENERAL CENSUS

Reuben (Num 26:5–11)

5–6. *Reuben, the firstborn of Israel.* Cf. Genesis 46:8: *bekôr Yaʿaqōb Reʾûbēn* "The firstborn of Jacob, Reuben." The names of the four sons of Reuben listed here—Enoch, Pallu, Hezron and Carmi—are identical to those recorded in Genesis 46:9 and Exodus 6:14, except that here reference is to the clans of Reuben's sons, not to the sons themselves. This difference nuances the translation of ***benê Reʾûbēn*** to mean "descendants of Reuben" rather than "sons of Reuben." The same nuance informs all of the entries in the census of Numbers 26, because, in the priestly chronology, generations had passed since the descent into Egypt and the Israelite sojourn there (cf. 1 Chron 5:3).

As to the clan eponyms themselves, the following may be stated by way of explanation: (1) *Ḥanôk,* (Enoch) may mean "dedication," as said of a home, temple or possibly city (Deut 20:5, 1 Kings 8:63, Ps 30:1, Num 7:10–11, 84, 88, Neh 12:27). The Hebrew form *Ḥanôk* would then represent an infinitival form, a masculine counterpart to feminine *ḥanūkkāh* "dedication." It is most likely a shortened form (sometimes referred to as hypocoristicon) of *ḥanôk-ʾēl,* or possibly *ḥanôk-yāh* "El's/YH's dedication." Throughout the census lists it will be noted that many of the names are shortened forms. The question as to whether the missing component is *-ʾēl* or *-yāh* cannot be answered with certainty in every case. There are two variable factors to be considered: On the one hand, the patriarchal lists, as well as certain sources in Numbers favor El, and on the other, we find full forms of some of the same names attested elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible with Yah.

In the present case, the sense of "dedication" may be implied by Genesis 4:17, where Cain is said to have named the city he built after his firstborn son, Enoch. Genesis 5:18–24 presumably speak of a second Enoch, of the seventh generation of the primeval history, who walked with God and was assumed into heaven. In literary terms, both sources may be referring to the same legendary personage, however. Be that as it may, we find in Genesis 25:4 a certain Enoch listed among the grandsons of Abraham; the son of one, Midian, born to him from his second wife, Keturah. All of the Enochs were presumably firstborn sons, and the present Reubenite, the Enoch of Genesis 46, Exodus 6:14 and Numbers 26, likewise follows in that tradition. Whether the name reflects the sense of *ḥānîk* "retainer, trained solder(?)" in Genesis 14:14, a meaning resonated in Proverbs 22:6, is uncertain.

(2) *Pallû'* (Pallu), a likely shorthand form of *Pelāyāh* "Yah's wonder(?)" (1 Chron 3:24, with variant spelling in Neh 8:7, 10:11). The Murāšû archives of the Achaemenid period attest the Babylonian personal name *Pili-Jama,* (Stolper 1985: 26:2, 94:3).

(3) *Ḥeṣrōn* (Hezron) most probably means "courtyard dweller," namely, a town resident, in contrast to a nomad. This name derives from Hebrew *ḥāṣēr* "enclosed courtyard," and related forms such as *ḥaṣērîm* "unwalled settlement, village," (Lev 25:31, Deut 2:23, Isa 42:11, Neh 12:29). Several biblical toponyms bear the component *ḥāṣēr*. In fact, Joshua 15:25 mentions a site, *Ḥeṣrôn,* located in the Negeb. An Arabic cognate *ḥaḏr* "permanent settlement" is attested. In addition to the Reubenite, Hezron, Numbers 26:12 (cf, Gen 46:12) lists a certain Judahite, the son of Perez who is named Hezron (cf. 1 Chron 2:9). (4) *Karmî* (Carmi) means "vintner; one who owns or tends an orchard." As was true of Hezron, there was also at least one Judahite named Carmi (Jos 7:1, 18, 1 Chron 2:7, 4:1). Otherwise, the Reubenite by this name is known from Genesis 46:9, Exodus 6:14, 1 Chronicles 5:3. Tracing the derivations of the clan eponyms, to which so much effort is being devoted, is necessary in order to arrive at a judgment regarding the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the priestly genealogies and of the priestly tribal traditions, as a whole.

Here, the force of prepositional *lamed* is "affiliated with, related to-", or even: "descending from, belonging to-." It is missing from the first entry, that of Enoch, but has been bracketed in the translation in order to establish consistency. In the census of Numbers 1, and in the list of chieftains in Numbers 13, the precise sense of prepositional *lamed* was: "representing X." See the Notes to Numbers 1:5 (Levine 1993:135–136).

The various lists differ in significant respects. It is noteworthy that Genesis 46 does not speak of *mišpāḥôt* "clans." In contrast, Numbers 1 refers to the clan as a unit, and also refers to "patriarchal 'houses,' " of which there is no mention in Numbers 26. Nor do we find in Numbers 26 any terms for "tribe," neither *šēbeṭ* nor *maṭṭeh.*

7. *These are the Reubenite clans.* The term *pequddîm* "musters" is explained at length in the Notes to Numbers 1:3 (Levine 1993:134–135). The point to be emphasized is that this term does not simply mean "counting," although counting was inevitably involved in the process, but rather conveys the sense of deployment; the arraying and assignment of forces. Hence: "musters." The tribal totals given in Numbers 26 consistently differ from those given in Numbers 1, with some exceeding and others being less numerous than the earlier totals. This subject will be explored in the Comments.

8–10. The record zooms in on one of the Reubenite clans, proceeding through two additional generations, to reach Eliab, son of Pallu, and the three sons of Eliab, Nemuel, Dathan and Abiram. As noted by Gray, it is not uncommon for a list to begin by referring to the sons of an eponym, and then to list only one person. There will be further instances both of focusing and of the extension of the record beyond a single generation, and these will be noted in due course. Here, the reason for doing so is fairly obvious: It was important to single out the fate of two of Eliab's sons, Dathan and Abiram, who joined forces with the faction of Korah, and perished as a result (see Numbers 16–17, both Notes and Comments [Levine 1993:405–432]). For the names *'Elî'āb, Dātān,* 'Abîrām (Eliab, Dathan, Abiram) and *Qōraḥ* (Korah) see the Notes to Numbers 16:1 (Levine 1993:411). The name *Nemû'ēl* (Nemuel) will recur in the musters of Simeon (see Notes to Num 26:12, below), where it is variously written *Yemû̆'ēl,* which means: "El has spoken, sworn," from the Aramaic root *y-m-y* (Levy 1963:II, 244, s.v. *yemā' / yemî'*).

(the same Dathan and Abiram, the elect of the community, who agitated against Moses and against Aaron)

Here begins an explanatory tangent, or gloss, which continues through Numbers 26:11. The Hebrew root *n-ṣ-h* "to be agitated, hostile; to fight," is most often realized in the Niphal (Exod 2:19, 21:22, Lev 24:10, Deut 25:11, 2 Sam 14:6). The Hiphil construction *hiṣṣāh ʿal* "to beleaguer, agitate against" is restricted to this verse. Cf. *hiṣṣah 'et* "to invade, attack" in Psalm 60:2, in a caption telling of David's aggression against the Aramean kingdoms. There are also the Hiphil-based nouns, *maṣṣāh* "conflict, contention" (Isa 58:4, Prov 13:10, 17:19) and *maṣṣūt,* with the same meaning (Isa 41:12). In Numbers 16:3 the idiom is: *wayyiqāhalû ʿal* "They rallied *en masse* against-." As in Numbers 16, rebelling against God's appointed leaders is tantamount to rebellion against God himself. The Hebrew *hû' Dātān wa-*'Abîrām "the same Dathan and Abiram" identifies the subjects more specifically. Cf. Exodus 6:26: *hû' 'Aharôn û-Mōšeh* "The same Aaron and Moses," where the order is reversed.

The term *qerû'ê hāʿēdāh* "the elect of the community" is explained in the Notes to Numbers 1:16 (Levine 1993: 138). Cf. *neśiê ʿēdāh qerî'ê môʿēd* "chieftains of the community, those called in the assembly" in Numbers 16:2, in speaking of Korah's faction. Numbers 26:10 harmonizes the two traditions on the fate of Korah and his faction. In the JE version, the earth swallowed them up (Num 16:29–34), whereas in the priestly tradition they were consumed by fire (Num 16:35).

(They became a symbol.)

Based on usage, Hebrew *nēs* means "banner, standard," something raised on high and visible from a distance. The most frequent verb used in association with *nēs* is *nāśā'* "to raise up, lift" (Isa 5:26, 11:12, 13:2, Jer 4:6), and once *hērîm* "to raise up" (Isa 62:10). Most telling is Numbers 21:9, where we read that Moses was told to fashion a metallic serpent and place it atop a *nēs* "standard, pole" for all to see (cf. Jer 4:21) (see Notes to Num 21:9). The sense of "symbol, sign" derives from the visibility of the standard. Gray translates *nēs* as "wonder, warning," which would express the reactions of those who witnessed the sudden annihilation of Korah's faction.

11. *(The sons of Korah did not die, however.)* This concludes the gloss. Most likely, it was appended by one conscious of the contradiction with Numbers 26:58, below, which registers a Korahite clan in the Levitical census. Possibly, such an editor was puzzled by the mention of *benê Qōraḥ* "the sons of Korah" in the captions of no less than eight Psalms, suggesting that these Levites were temple musicians. There are also probable references to the same Korahites in 1 Chronicles 9:19, 31, 12:6, 26:1, 19, 2 Chronicles 20:19.

Simeon (Num 26:12–14)

12. *Descendants of Simeon, by their clans.* The opening formula is a bit more expansive than it was in the Reubenite list, adding *lemispeḥōtām* "according to their clans." With the exception of Judah, all tribal musters are henceforth to be introduced this way. Simeon included five clans: Nemuel, Yamin, Yachin, Zerah and Saul. (1) On *Nemû'ēl* (Nemuel), see above, in Notes to Numbers 26:9. (2) *Yāmîn* (Gen 46:10, Exod 6:15, 1 Chron 4:24), like *Binyāmîn*, means "southerner." (3) *Yākîn* (Yachin) is most likely a shorthand form of *Yākînȳah*, which, like *Yekonȳah* / *Yehôȳakîn*, means "Yah has established, made firm" (Gen 46:10, Exod 6:15, 1 Chron 4:24). These last two names both crop up in postexilic sources (*Yākîn* in Neh 11:10, 1 Chron 9:10, 24:17, 2 Chron 3:17; *Yāmîn* in Neh 8:7, 1 Chron 2:27). (4) *Zeraḥ* (Gen 46:12, 1 Chron 4:24) is a shorthand form of *Zeraḥyāh* "Yah has shone." Several Israelites, of different tribes bearing this name, are known, as well as some non-Israelites, like an Edomite clan leader (Gen 36:17). (5) *Šā'ûl* (Saul, Gen 46:10, Exod 6:15, 1 Chron 4:24), a likely shorthand form of an El name, means "asked of El" (1 Sam 1:20). This name is also borne by an Edomite king (Gen 36:37). Cf. *Še'altĭēl* "I asked of El" (Hag 1:1, 2:23). Genesis 46 and Exodus 6 mention a sixth clan, Ohad, missing here and in 1 Chronicles 4.

Gad (Num 26:15–18)

Gad included seven clans: (1) *Ṣepôn* (Zephon) is a likely shorthand form of *Ṣepanyāh/Ṣepanyāhû* "Yah/Yahu has protected, hidden" (Zeph 1:1, 2 Kings 25:18). In Genesis 46:16, this name is written *Ṣipyôn*, possibly reflecting the verbal root *ṣ-p-y* "to see, expect, hope," thereby offering another possible derivation. (2) *Ḥaggî* (Gen 46:16), is similar to *Ḥaggay*, the name of the prophet, meaning "festival pilgrim." (3) Šūnnî (Shuni—Gen 46:16), of unclear meaning (*HALAT*: 1393). (4) *'Oznî* (Ozni), a probable shorthand form of *'Azanyāh* (Neh 10:10), "Yah has heard." In Genesis 46:16, in the same sequence the name given is *'Eṣbōn.* (5) *'Ērî* (Eri) is perhaps related to *'Ēr,* one of Judah's sons (see below, Num 26:19). If so, it would mean "one called, aroused by the deity," deriving from the verbal root *'-w-r* "to awaken (stative)," from which the Aramaic cognate *'rrn* "arousers," a synonym of *ḥzn* "seers" in the Zakkur inscription (Gibson 1975: 8–9). This sense is implicit in the Pollel forms of the same root in Isaiah 14:9 and Job 3:8, where the contexts also suggest the rousing or invoking of divine beings. (6) *'Arôd[i]* (Arodi—Gen 46:16) is of uncertain etymology, and may be a variant of *'Ardî* in Numbers 26:40, below, in the genealogy of Benjamin (see *HALAT*:82, s.v. *'Ard, 'Ardôn,* and *'Arôd*). (7) *'Ar'ēlî* (Areli—Gen 46:16), with variants *'Arî'ēl, 'Arî'ēli* (2 Sam 23:30). The etymology is unclear, although a derivation from *'arî, 'aryēh* "lion" is not improbable (*HALAT*:84–85, s.v. *'Arî'ēlî*). In summary, the clans of the tribe of Gad bear names attested, for the most part, only in the parallel genealogy of Genesis 46.

Judah (Num 26:19–22)

19. *(Er and Onan died in the Land of Canaan.)* The list notes the premature deaths of two of Judah's sons, Er and Onan, as recounted in Genesis 38. Singular *wayyāmot* "he died" serves a plural subject which it precedes in the Hebrew. The name *'Ēr* (Er) was explained in the Notes to Numbers 26:16, above, where we encountered the gentilic form, *'Ērî.* The name *'Ônān* (Onan—Gen 38:4–8 ff., 46:12, 1 Chron 2:3) may be a variant of *'Ôn,* one of the insurrectionists mentioned in Numbers 16:1. Its meaning would be "strong one." See Notes to Numbers 16:1 (see Levine 1993:411; *HALAT*:22, s.v. 'Ônān, *'Ônām,* for the suggested Amorite cognate of this name).

20–21. *Remaining descendants of Judah, by their clans.* As if to restart the list, these verses proceed to register the three clans related to the surviving son, Shelah: the clan of Shelah himself, and the clans of Perez and Zerah. The list then focuses on the line of Perez, listing the two Perezite clans, Hezron and Hamul. The names Hezron and Zerah have already occurred, and were explained in the Notes to Numbers 26:6, 13, above. *Šelaḥ* (Shelah—Gen 38:5, 11, 14, 26, 46:12, 1 Chron 2:3, 4:21, probably means "asked"—of a deity, and reflects the syncopation of *aleph,* from *še'ēlāh* "request," like *Sa'ul* (*HALAT*: 1393, s.v. *Šelaḥ* II). *Pereṣ* (Perez), more likely **Pōrēṣ,* (Gen 38:29, 46:12, Ruth 4:12, 18, Neh 11:4, 9, 1 Chron 2:5) probably means "victor, conqueror" (Gen 28:14, 2 Sam 5:20, Micah 2:13). Finally, *Ḥāmûl* (Gen 46:12, 1 Chron 2:5) means "spared, rescued." The focus on the line of Perez reflects concern with tracing the Davidic line, as is done more fully in Ruth 4:18–22 (cf. Gen. 46:12, 1 Chron 2:3–20).

Issachar (Num 26:23–25)

The tribe of Issachar included four clans: (1) *Tôlā'* (Tola—Gen 46:13, Judg 10:1, 1 Chron 7:1–2), "worm(?)." (2) *Pūwwāh* (Puvah—Gen 46:13, written

Pû'āh in 1 Chron 7:1) "dyer(?)"; *HALAT*:806, s.v. *Pū'āh*). The gentilic form *Happûnî* would reflect use of *nun* as a glide sound. (3) *Yāšûb* (Yashub—Gen 46:13, Ezra 10:29) is a shorthand form of either *Yāšûbîāh or Yāšûb'ēl*. "Yah/El has restored," one of a group of personal names incorporating a form of the verbal root *s-w-b* "to return," Hiphil "to restore." (4) *Šimrōn* (Shimron—Gen 46:13, 1 Chron 7:1) may be a variant writing of *Šim'ōn* (*HALAT*:1455, s.v. *Šimrōn* II), or a name conveying the sense of protection, the verb *š-m-r*.

Zebulun (Num 26:26–27)

The tribe of Zebulun consisted of three clans. (1) *Sered* occurs only here. Ugaritic attests *bn.srd*, and Akkadian provides a term, *sāridu* "one in charge of pack animals(?)." (*HALAT*:726, s.v. *Sered*). (2) *'Ēlôn* (Elon—Gen 46:14), probably a variant of consonantal *'ylwn*, is the name of a Zebulunite judge in Judges 12:11–12, and this may account for its occurrence here as the eponym of the Zebulunite clan. (*HALAT* 21, s.v. *'-w-í* II, and 52, s.v. *'Ēlôn* II). Its meaning is probably "powerful one, hero," reflecting the root '-w-l/'-y-l "be strong" (cf. *'eyālût* "strength" in Ps 22:20). (3) *Yaḥle'ēl* (Yahleel—Gen 46:14), "El had fulfilled the promise," is a cognate of the Phoenician personal name *yḥlb'l* (Benz 1972:127).

Joseph: Manasseh (Num 26:28–34)

In the braided narratives of Genesis 48 the preeminence of Ephraim over Manasseh, the firstborn of Joseph, is dramatized but this did not affect the present census, as it did the census of Numbers 1, with the result that here Manasseh, not Ephraim, precedes in the sequence of tribes.

29. *Affiliated with Machir, the Machirite clan.* Only one clan is listed for Manasseh, the clan of Machir, from which the clan of Gilead derives. The musters of Manasseh extend to the third generation, which is where the real concern of the authors lies. As explained in Notes to Numbers 27:1–11, and in the Comments to Numbers 27, there is an intricate relationship between chapters 26 and 27 of Numbers regarding the status of the tribe of Manasseh, the only tribe whose territory was split between Transjordan and Cisjordan. Numbers 26 provides the eponyms that link Numbers 26 and 27 to each other, and link both of them to the traditions of Joshua 16–17. For itself, Numbers 27 provides an etiological legitimation of the claim of the tribe of Manasseh to settle territory west of the Jordan, whereas the Transjordanian claim is documented in other sources, such as Numbers 32, where it comes in for extensive discussion.

The Machirite clan appears here for the first time in Torah literature, although there is mention of Machir as Joseph's grandson in Genesis 50:23. Numbers 32:39–42 speak of Machir, and two other sons of Manasseh, unnamed in Numbers 26, namely, Yair and Nobah, both of whom conquered territories in Transjordan, and settled in them (see Notes to Num 32:41–42). Here we read simply that Machir had a son named Gilead, and this information is followed by a list of the progressive clans of Gilead. Whereas *Mākîr* (Machir) is a personal name, with the probable meaning of "given over, dedicated, sold" into cultic service, Gilead, listed as his son, is, in the first instance, the name of a territory or region in central Transjordan, also known from extra-biblical sources (cf. Notes to Num 32:1, where this name, of uncertain etymology, is discussed).

30–31. *These are the descendants of Gilead.* As explained in Joshua 17:1–6, and following, once the Machirite clan of Manasseh claimed territory in Transjordan and the Bashan, only the remaining six Manassite clans laid claim to territory west of the Jordan. Those included the five Gileadite clans listed here, Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem and Shemida, and, in addition, the Hepherite clan, with its special problem.

Some information on these interesting names would be helpful: (1) Masoretic *ʾÎʿezer* is better written *ʾAbîʿezer* "My Father is a protector" (cf. *ʾabî hāʿezrî* "the head of the Ezerite clan") in most other Gileadite lists (Jos 17:2, Judg 6:34, 8:2). In 1 Chronicles 7:18, still another Manassite is listed as *ʾAbîʿezer*. (2) The name *Ḥēleq* (Helek—Jos 17:2, cf. Neh 12:15) means "portion," and is most probably a shorthand form of *Ḥilqîyāh*/ *Ḥilqîyāhū* "Yah/ Yahu is my portion" (2 Kings 22:8, and elsewhere). (3) *ʾAśrîʾél* (Asriel—Jos 17:2, 1 Chron 7:14), and the variants *ʾAśārʾēl*, *ʾAśarʾēlāh* (1 Chron 4:16—a Judahite; 1 Chron 25:2—a Levitical musician), all with prothetic *aleph*, mean: "El is my commander, prince," or simply, "El is commander." (4) *Šekem* (Shechem) is, in the first instance, a toponym, a city in the territory of Ephraim. Literally it means "shoulder, upper body," but it bears the connotation of "cliff, mountain ridge," or "sector, portion." A prince of the city by that name was known as Shechem (Gen 33:19). There are, technically speaking, two Manassites listed by this name, a son of Gilead, as here (Jos 17:2), and a grandson of Gilead, by Shemida (1 Chron 7:19). (5) The name *Šemîdaʿ* (Shemida) means: "He (= the deity) knew the name" (Jos 17:2, 1 Chron 7:19), incorporating the verb *y-d-ʿ*.

32. *Affiliated with Hepher. Hēper* is, once again, a toponym (Jos 12:17—a Canaanite town; 1 Kings 4:10—a district near Socho). Cf. Gath Hahepher, the prophet Jonah's hometown (Jos 19:13, 2 Kings 14:25), and *ʾereṣ, Ḥēper* "the district of Hepher" (1 Kings 4:10), and *Ḥapārayim* (Jos 19:19). The meaning is probably "vista," something seen, literally, "dug out, searched," as suggested by Joshua 2:2–3. The name is attested in Ugaritic (*HALAT*:327, s.v. *Ḥēper* II).

33–34. The Manassite entries of Numbers 26 include both the Transjordanian and Cisjordanian clans of Manasseh, and focus on the generation of the daughters of Zelophehad, son of Hepher, whose territory lay west of the Jordan. This focus is best understood against the background of Numbers 27:1–

11, where we read of the petition of Zelophehad's daughters to have their right to hold land west of the Jordan confirmed (see Notes to Num 27:1–11).

Of special interest is the fact that four of the Manassite clan names are attested as the names of towns or districts in the region of Samaria, listed in the Samaria Ostraca, from which commodities were dispatched to certain named persons. (a) *ʾbʿzr* (= *ʾAbîʿezer*—Ahituv 1992:173, s.v. number 28, line 1; Ahituv 1992:183). (b) *Śrʾl*, a shortened form of *ʾAśrîʾēl* (Ahituv 1992:189, s.v. no. 48, line 1; Ahituv 1992:194). (c) *Škm* (= *Šekem*—Ahituv 1992:191). (d) *Šmydʿ*(= *Šemîdaʿ*, a frequently attested place-name appearing in no less than seven ostraca (Ahituv 1992:313, Index). As will be observed presently, the names of two of Zelophehad's daughters, Hoglah and Noah, are similarly attested as place names in the Samaria Ostraca, and their grandfather's name, Hepher, also occurs as a toponym, as does the daughter named Tirzah. The naming of clans by toponyms in this case reveals the hidden agenda of Numbers 26–27, which is the substantiation of the claim of the tribe of Manasseh to territory west of the Jordan.

The name *Ṣelopheḥad* (Zelophehad—cf. Num 27:1, 7, 36:8, Jos 17:38, 1 Chron 7:15) probably derives from Hebrew *ṣēl* "shadow, protection" + *paḥad* "fear, awe," a way of referring to divine power (Gen 32:41, 53). Hence, "one protected by divine power." The component *ṣillu* "shade," the Akkadian cognate of Hebrew *ṣēl*, figures in many personal names. The list of the five daughters of Zelophehad, repeated in Numbers 27 and 36, is of particular interest. (1) *Maḥlāh* (Jos 17:3, 1 Chron 7:18) probably derives from the root *ḥ-l-h* "to look forward, expect, hope, entreat." (2) *Noʿah* (Noah—Jos 17:3) is of uncertain meaning. It is attested as the name of a town or district in the Samaria Ostraca (Ahituv 1992:193). (3) *Ḥoglāh* (Jos 17:3) has been taken to mean "partridge." It, too, is attested as a place-name in the Samaria Ostraca (Ahituv 1992:191, s.v. no. 47, line 1; Ahituv 1992:192). (4) *Milkāh* (Jos 17:3), a variant of *malkāh* "queen," is also attested as the name of the wife of Abraham's brother, Nahor (Gen 11:29, 22:20–23, 24:15, 24, 47). The component *mlkt* "queen" figures in any number of West Semitic royal and divine names. (5) *Tirṣāh* (Tirzah). Such is the name of a Canaanite city-state (Jos 12:24), the hometown of Jeroboam I and the residence of Omri, king of Northern Israel (1 Kings 15:21, 33, Song of Songs 6:4, and see *HALAT*:1653, s.v. *Tirṣāh* 1 and 2).

Ephraim (Num 26:35–37)

Three primary clans are listed for Ephraim: Shuthelah, Becher and Tahan, at which point the muster zooms in on Shuthelah, for whom one clan, Eran, is listed. (1) *Šūtelaḥ* (Shutelah—1 Chron 7:1) is of uncertain meaning. (2) *Beker* (Becher) is listed as a Benjaminite in Genesis 46:21, 1 Chron 7:6–8. The name probably means "firstborn." (3) *Taḥan* (1 Chron 7:20) probably derives from the root *ḥ-n-n* "to be gracious" (*HALAT*:1582–83, s.v. *Taḥan*). A son of Shuthelah is Eran, probably a variant of Er, a son of Judah. (See above, in the Notes to Num 26:19, where this name is explained.)

Benjamin (Num 26:38–41)

Five primary clans are listed for Benjamin: Bela, Ashbel, Ahiram, Shephupham and Hupham. The muster then zooms in on the clan of Bela, listing two Belaite clans: Ahiram and Naaman. (1) *Belaʿ* (Bela—Gen 46:21, 1 Chron 7:6–7, 8:1, 3) designates several persons, and is cognate with *Bilʿam* (Balaam) the diviner summoned by Balak, king of Moab, to pronounce execrations against Israel. It is also the name of one of the kings of Edom (Gen 36:32–33, 1 Chron 1:44). This name is, therefore, explained in the Notes to Numbers 22:5 as part of the discussion of this name. Its probable meaning is "destroyer." (2) *ʾAšbēl* (Ashbel—Gen 46:21, 1 Chron 8:1) is most likely a contraction of *ʾEšbaʿal* (consonantal *ʾšbʿl*), the original name of one of Saul's sons (1 Chron 8:33, 9:39), most often written *ʾîšbōšet* (2 Sam 2:8, and elsewhere). It means "Baal exists," and is attested as the name of one of the kings of Byblos, (*ʾItibaʿal*), in Phoenician epigraphic literature, as in the Ahiram inscription, line 1 (Gibson 1982:14; *HALAT*:89, s.v. *ʾEšbaʿal*). Of interest is the fact that the Phoenician *ʾItibaʿal* was the son of Ahiram, a king of Byblos, the very eponym of the next clan of Benjamin. (3) *ʾAḥîrām* (Ahiram), the Benjaminite, is known only from this verse. Nevertheless, the name itself is well known, representing the full spelling of Hiram, a dynastic name of the kings of Tyre in biblical literature (2 Sam 5:11, 1 Kings 5:15-16 and elsewhere). What is more, it is also attested as the name of one of the kings of Byblos, the father of *ʾItibaʿal* (see right above, under (2). It means "the exalted one is my brother." (4) *Šepûpām* (Shephupham), is written *Šepûpān* in 1 Chronicles 8:5, and both are reduplications of *Supam*, attested in the gentilic form *ha-Ŝûpāmî*. The name is otherwise unknown, and remains unexplained. (5) *Ḥûpām* (Hupham), written *Ḥūppîm* in Genesis 46:21, 1 Chronicles 7:12–15, is of unknown meaning.

The sons of Bela are *ʾArd* (Ard), a probable variant of *ʾArôd*, listed in the muster of Gad (see Notes to Num 26:17, above), and *Naʿamān* (= Naaman—Gen 46:21, 1 Chron 8:4, 7), a well-known name in its own right. In biblical sources it is that of the Aramean general who had recourse to the prophet Elisha (2 Kings 5). There are also the feminine names *Naʿamāh* and *Nāʿōmî*. All mean "beautiful." See *HALAT*:666–667 for comparative information about this group of names.

Dan (Num 26:42–43)

Only one clan is listed for the tribe of Dan. *Šûḥām* (Shuham) may represent a metathesis of *Ḥûšîm*, as it is written in Genesis 46:24. This name is unexplained. The formulation is plural, even though only one clan is listed.

Asher (Num 26:44–47)

Three clans are listed for Asher: Imnah, Ishvi and Beriah. The list then adds two clans affiliated with Beriah, Heber and Malchiel, and concludes by providing the name of Asher's daughter, Serah. (1) *Yimnāh* (Imnah) is probably a variant of *Yāmîn* "southerner," a name already encountered above in the muster of Simeon (Num 26:12). (2) *Yišwî* (Ishvi—Gen 46:17, cf. 1 Sam 14:49), derives from the verbal root *š-w-y* "to be noble, to rule," hence "the deity rules" (*HALAT* 425, s.v. *Yišwî*). (3) *Berîʿāh* (Beriah—Gen 46:17, 1 Chron 7:23, 30, 8:13–16) "eminent, victorious," explained by the Arabic *baraʿa*. (*HALAT*: 150, s.v. *Berîʿāh*).

As for the discussion of Asher: *Ḥeber* (Gen 46:17, 1 Chron 7:31, cf. Judg 4:11, 17, 21, 5:24) is a well-known name, and it means "companion, brotherhood." This verbal root, which means "to join, befriend," probably underlies the name of the town, *Hebron*. The name *Malkî'ēl* (Malchiel—Gen 46:17, 1 Chron 7:31) means "El is my king," and is one of a group of personal names composed of *melek* "king" + the name of a deity, or in reverse order.

Naphtali (Num 26:48–50)

Four clans are listed for Naphtali: Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer and Shillem. (1) *Yaḥse'ēl* (Jahzeel—Gen 46:24), also written *Yaḥsî'ēl* (1 Chron 7:13), means "El has counted, included." (2) *Gûnî* (Gen 46:24, 1 Chron 7:13) "partridge," cf. Arabic *el-jūnī* (*HALAT*:176, s.v. *Gûnî*). *(3) Yēṣer* (Jezer—Gen 46:24, 1 Chron 7:13, cf. 1 Chron 25:11) is a probable shorthand form of a name connoting creation. (4) *Šillēm* (Shillem—Gen 46:24, 1 Chron 7:13) is one of a large group of biblical personal names composed with various forms of the verbal roots *ŝ-l-m* "to be whole, complete, at peace," Piel "to fulfill, complete."

Sum Total of Israelite Musters (Num 26:51)

This verse presents the total of all of the tribes, except for the Levites, which are to come in Numbers 26:57–62. There is a discrepancy between the present total of 601,730 and that provided in Numbers 1:46, namely, 603,550.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 26:52–56: APPORTIONMENT OF THE LAND

53–54. *To the above shall the land be alloted.* The statement that "the land" (Hebrew *hā'āreṣ*) was to be divided among those tribes and clans enumerated in Numbers 26:5–51 is inaccurate, if we are to judge by other traditions of the book of Numbers, most notably Numbers 34, and by the contents of Numbers 26 itself. Although Numbers 26 does not make the point explicit, Numbers 27 and 32 relate that the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and all but one of the Manassite clans, that of Hepher, settled in Transjordan. It would be logical to conclude that this statement on the apportionment of the land was appended to the census record in the spirit of Joshua 15–17 where the role of the *gôrāl* "lot" is highlighted. The matter of the apportionment of the land will be explored in the Comments, because it has a bearing on the overall character of Torah traditions on the Transjordanian Israelite community.

The key verb in Numbers 26:53–56 is the Niphal of the root *ḥ-l-q* "to divide, apportion," which, if correct, would be distinctive to this passage. The land, as subject, is apportioned. It has been suggested that the Piel would be more appropriate: *teḥallēq [eʾt] hāʾāreṣ* "you shall apportion the land," with a similar correction to *yeḥallēq ʾet hāʾāreṣ* "he shall apportion the land." This would avoid the disagreement in gender between masculine *yeḥallēq* and feminine *hāʾāres*. But, since agreement in gender is not required when the verb precedes the subject, witness *yûtan naḥalātô* "his territory shall be granted" (the masculine internal Qal passive before a feminine subject) in Numbers 26:54, there is no reason to alter the pointing of the text. Numbers 34, which details the apportionment of the land, favors the verb *nāḥal* "to receive as *naḥalāh*," and the idiom *nāpal benaḥalāh* "to fall as *naḥalāh*" (Num 34:2). Ezekiel 47:13–20, still another biblical passage that details a plan for the apportionment of the land, uses the Hithpael, *hitnaḥēl* "to grant to one's self as *naḥalāh*," along with the simple stem. The key term is *naḥalāh* itself, which has been translated "territory." When *naḥalāh* refers to land belonging to an individual or family, it is more appropriately rendered "estate" (Num 16:14). For the derivation of Hebrew *naḥalāh*, see the Notes to Numbers 18:20, in Levine 1993:449–450.

In proportion to the number of names.

The Hebrew *bemispar šēmôt* refers to the number of clans within each tribe, those listed by their names or eponyms. This is rendered explicit in the following verse, Numbers 26:54. The polarity of *rab-meʿaṭ* "numerous-few," "large-small," and verbal usage, such as *yarbeh-yamʿîṭ* "to increase, to reduce" is characteristic of priestly idiom (Exod: 30:15, Lev 25:16, Num 33:54). The population of each tribe is to be determined by its musters (*peqūddîm*) in the census, which, in turn, will determine the extent of the territory that is granted.

55–56. *Moreover, it is by lot that the land shall be apportioned.* Prepositional *beth* in *begôrāl* is instrumental: "by means of the lot." This requirement is repeated in the following verse: *ʿal pî haggôrāl* "by order of the lot." This is the force of *ʿal pî* in authoritative contexts. The Hebrew term *gôrāl* "lot," of uncertain etymology, may designate any one of several small, usually flat, objects, of stone, wood, bone or other substances, and of various forms, that were used to reveal the divine will (Levine 1989:50–51, s.v. Lev 8:8). A synonym of *gôrāl* is *pûr,* cognate with Akkadian *pūru,* used in Esther 3:7: *hippîl pûr hû' haggôrāl* "He cast a *pūr,* which is to say, the lot." Gevaryahu-Loewenstamm 1954:459–461 differentiate between two methods of employing lots: One could "cast" them or toss them down, an act usually conveyed by verbs such as *hippîl,* which express this meaning, or one could place them in a container, and then draw them, so that the lot would "rise," an action conveyed by the Hebrew verb *ʿālāh.*

The term *gôrāl* may also connote the outcome of the process, the "lot" or "portion" of those submitting to the divinatory process. Divination by lot was the only form of such magical practice fully endorsed by official biblical monotheism. It included the Urim and Thummin, a kind of lot employed by Israelite priests who made oracular inquiry of God by this means (Levine 1989b:50–51, s.v. Lev 8:8). The sacrilege of Achan was discovered by using lots (Joshua 7), as was Jonathan' inadvertent violation of his father Saul's ban (1 Sam 14). In a similar way, Jonah was identified as the one responsible for arousing God's wrath (Jonah 1:7). In the context of the cult, the scapegoat was selected by the *gôrāl* (Lev 16:8–10), and the postexilic books tell of the use of lots in determining who would contribute certain offerings (Neh 10:35, 11:1), and perform tours of priestly duty (1 Chron 24:51, 25:8, 26:13–14).

Numbers 26:52–56 is one of several biblical texts that project the apportionment of the Promised Land to the Israelites by lot. The closest to it is Numbers 34 (cf. Num 33:54, 36:2), also part of the priestly component in Torah literature. This priestly tradition carries over into Joshua, and it dominates most of Joshua 15–21, whose contents deal with the apportionment of the Land (also note 1 Chron 6:50–51). In the Comments, the relationship of all biblical traditions relating to the apportionment of the Promised Land will be discussed.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 26:57–62: THE SEPARATE LEVITICAL CENSUS

It is in Numbers that the Levites emerge as a distinct order, or class of cultic servitors, a status signaled by the separate census of the tribe of Levi. This subject has been explored in the Introduction to Numbers 1–20, and in the Notes and Comments to Numbers 3–4, and Numbers 8. What is presented here in Numbers 26:57–62 is best understood as a condensed record of the elaborate Levitical geneology of Numbers 3–4, where the *neśî'îm* "tribal chieftains" of the Levites are listed, their musters totaled, and the particular assignments of the Levitical clans enumerated. Also characteristic of this summary is its focus on the family of Moses and Aaron (and Miriam), reminiscent of Exodus 6:14–27. All of the personal names listed here have already been commented upon and explained in the Notes to Numbers 3–4 (Levine 1993:154–163, 165–178).

57. The listing of the three principal Levitical *misp̌āḥôt* "clans" follows the formulation of the general census of Numbers 26 (see the Notes to Num 26:5–6, above).

58. *These are the clans of Levi.* The five clans listed in the present verse are gathered from the three principal clans, without rendering the affiliations explicit in each case. Specifically, the Libnite clan is related to Gershon; the Mushite and Mahlite clans to Merari; and the Hebronite clan to Kohath. The primary Kohathite clan also produced both the Korahite clan, from Yizhar (Num 16:2), and the Amramite clan, with which Moses, Aaron and Miriam were affiliated.

59–61. *The name of Amram's wife was Jochebed.* As written, Numbers 26:59 is unusual, but not in need of emendation. The relative clause *'ašer yāledāh 'ōtāh lelēwî bemiṣrayim* is elliptical: "-whom she (Jochebed's mother) bore to Levi in Egypt."

Nadab and Abihu died

The present summary of the Levitical census focuses on two prominent Levites, Aaron and Moses, and even more on Aaron than on Moses (cf. Exod 6:20–27). So, we are told that Aaron lost two of his sons, Nadab and Abihu, as a consequence of their cultic offense (Leviticus 10), leaving Eleazar and Ithamar. As we know, Eleazar was the primary successor of his father, and his line was promised the high priesthood forever (Num 25:10–15). He joined Moses in conducting the present census (see above, in the Notes to Num 26:1b).

62. The total musters of the Levites are presented separately from those of the rest of the Israelites. Furthermore, the male Levites were counted from the age of one month and above, not from twenty years of age and above, as was true of all Israelites (Num 26:2). This difference was discussed in Notes to Numbers 3:15 (Levine 1993:157–158), where it was explained that Levitical service was a hereditary office. Male Levites were consequently dedicated when they became viable infants at thirty days of age, a term set forth in Leviticus 27:6. It is repeated for emphasis that the Levites were not allotted a *nahalah* along with the other Israelite tribes, and for this reason had not been mustered as part of the general census. The form *hotpāqedû* "had been mustered" is abnormal, but is attested in Numbers 1:47, 2:33, and in 1 Kings 20:27 in similar summary statements. The sense is akin to that of the Hithpael *hitpāqedû* "They submitted to a muster" (Judg 20:15, 17, 21:9).

NOTES TO NUMBERS 26:63–65: A SUMMARY STATEMENT

Numbers 26:63–65 are resumptive. They state compliance with the order communicated to Moses and Eleazar in the opening verses of the chapter, Numbers 26:1b–4a, and also reinforce Numbers 26:51, above, where the total of the Israelite musters, minus the dedicated tribe of Levi, was provided. In addition, Numbers 26:64–65 represent one of the explanatory glosses typical of Numbers 26, and signify the fulfillment of the decree of Numbers 14:26–45, and more specifically of Numbers 14:30, 35. They restate that except for Joshua and Caleb, none of the wilderness generation had survived. Moses was exempt from this decree, although even he was not allowed to enter the Promised Land, a thought amplified in Deuteronomy 34.

COMMENT 1: CENSUS TAKING AS REVIEW AND AS PREPARATION

The purpose of the present discussion is to place Numbers 26 in literary perspective, showing where it fits into the textual arrangement of the Book of Numbers, and how it relates to other similar genealogical and tribal records preserved in Torah literature, and in the Hebrew Bible, generally. Beyond such considerations, it would be instructive, if at all possible, to identify the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the census record of Numbers 26; to know what it reflects historically.

Before discussing Numbers 26 in particular it would be well to preface some general remarks on the practice of census taking in biblical Israel and in the ancient Near East. The reader is referred to Levine 1993:134–135 for a preliminary discussion of this subject. One of the connotations of the verb *p-q-d*, which occurs in Numbers 26:63, and from which the term *peqûddîm* "musters" is derived, is "to poll, take a census; array, muster." Tracing usage of this verb leads us to relatively early biblical sources relevant to this practice. We read how leaders and kings mustered their forces before battle, including Joshua (Jos 8:10), Saul (1 Sam 11:8, 13:15, [14:17], 15:4), David (1 Sam 18:1), Ahab, king of Israel (1 Kings 20:15) and his son, Jehoram (2 Kings 3:6). Non-Israelite kings did the same. Thus, Ben-Hadad, the Aramean king, mustered his forces, and we read that, at the same time, the Israelite forces had also been arrayed (1 Kings 20:26–27).

Perhaps the best descriptions of the military muster are to be found in Judges 20 and 21, which probably represent parallel versions of the same events. There we read about preparations for the internecine war between the Benjaminites and the other tribes of Israel. Quotas were assigned to the tribes of Israel; fighting men were conscripted, and their totals registered. The forces then repaired to Bethel to make oracular inquiry of God, and, according to one version, to offer sacrifices. The Hebrew Bible also preserves later versions of census taking that more closely resemble, in formulation and structure, the contents of Numbers 26. The first of these is to be found in 2 Samuel 24, an observably late addendum to the Books of Samuel (Levine 1993d). Subsequently, in the Books of Chronicles, we encounter further references to census taking, where new forms of the verb *p-q-d* also describe this process. These will be taken up in due course.

COMMENT 2: TRIBAL EPONYMS, PATRIARCHAL "HOUSES," AND CLANS: THE PRIESTLY TRADITIONS

Logically, the first step in analyzing the census-taking record of Numbers 26 is to compare it with the record of the earlier census taking of the Israelite community preserved in Numbers 1, and which is resonated in Numbers 2, the order of march. It must also be compared with the separate Levitical census of Numbers 3–4. This process was begun in the Notes to Numbers 26, and will be elaborated here.

Compared with Numbers 26, the record of the earlier census in Numbers 1 is fairly skeletal. Although one finds in Numbers 1 routine repeated references to the *mišpāḥāh* "clan" and to the *bêt ʾābôt* "patriarchal 'house,' " that record actually says nothing about these components of the Israelite tribes. Numbers 1 does not really belong with the genealogical records of the Torah, but rather with the lists of *néśîʾîm* "tribal chieftains" that are preserved in Numbers 2, 7, 10, 13, and 34. In such lists, Reuben and Judah alternate as the firstborn, and there is also variation in the order of the tribes. To a list of this sort was added in Numbers 1 a record of the musters of each tribe, their *tôledōt* "those born to them," totaling the adult males who constituted the *ṣābāʾ* "work force, military personnel" of each tribe. As will be argued further on, that record was adapted from Numbers 26, and shares with it the overall orientation of 1 Chronicles. This explains the emphasis in Numbers 1 on the *bêt ʾābôt* "patriarchal 'house' " and the *ṣābāʾ* "personnel, workforce, military unit," both of which are prominent in Chronicles. In contrast, Numbers 3 and 4, comprising the separate census of the Levites, clearly belong with Numbers 26, and present detailed registers of the clans that made up that special tribe.

There are, nonetheless, significant differences between Numbers 26 and Numbers 3 and 4 that bear investigation. Numbers 26 is a census record listing the musters of the Israelite tribes, which are meticulously divided into their constituent clans. It is best understood as a reflex of Genesis 46, the record of Israelites who came to Egypt. At that projected time in the past, no clans had yet formed, and only seventy souls went down to Egypt. (In Exodus 6 we find a partial genealogy also composed in a manner similar to Numbers 26 and Numbers 3–4.) The *mišpāḥôt* listed in the primary record within Numbers 26 (Num 26:4b–51, 57–62) are named after the sons of the tribal eponym. With few variations, these are identical with those listed in Genesis 46. Thus, Reuben's first son was Enoch, and we consequently read of *mišpaḥat haḥanōkî* "the Enochite clan," and so on. In fact, Numbers 26:5, *Re'ûbēn bekôr Yiśrā'ēl* "Reuben, the firstborn of Israel," resonates Genesis 46:8, *bekôr Ya'aqōb Re'ûbēn* "The firstborn of Jacob—Reuben," as has been noted. In Numbers 26, the *mišpāḥāh* continues through subsequent generations, as evidenced by Numbers 26:21, where we read that Judah's grandsons from Perez, namely, Hezron and Hamul, both have *mišpāḥôt.* The separate census of the Levites in Numbers 26:57–62 is composed in the same way.

Looking ahead in biblical literature, we observe that Numbers 26 links up with the records of tribal land distribution preserved in Joshua 13–22. The relatedness of Genesis 46, Numbers 1, 3–4 and Numbers 26 to the genealogical lists of 1 Chronicles 5–7 and to other postexilic sources will also be explored in due course.

The breakdown of the tribe into *mišpāḥôt* is common to virtually all census records and genealogies preserved in biblical literature, including those in priestly sources. Not so the role of the *bêt 'ābôt* "patriarchal 'house,' " mentioned so repeatedly in Numbers 1, but which has no place in the primary tribal structures projected in Numbers 26. The only references in Numbers 26 to the *bêt 'ābôt* as a unit (or to *'ābôt* as an abbreviation of the same term) are to be found in the prescriptive introduction (Num 26:1–4a), and in the addendum on land distribution (Num 26:52–56). The primary record, Numbers 26:4b–51, speaks only of *mišpāḥôt.* The same situation confronts us in the genealogy of Exodus 6:14–25, where only in the superscription of Exodus 6:14a, and in the postscript of Exodus 6:25b, is there reference to the *bêt 'abôt,* whereas the actual record speaks only of *mispahot.*

In this regard, Numbers 26 resembles Joshua 13–22, even though these latter sources deal primarily with the distribution of the Promised Land to the tribes, not with tribal musters and genealogies, as such. And yet, in all of Joshua 13–19 there is no reference to the *bêt 'ābôt,* except in a final postscript, Joshua 19:51. Throughout these chapters, the standard formula, with variations, is: *lemaṭṭēh benê* X *lemišpeḥōtām* "For the tribe of the sons/descendants of X (= tribal eponym), according to their clans." The identical formulation characterizes Numbers 3 and 26. Most interesting is the situation encountered in Joshua 21. In a manner similar to Numbers 26, the introduction to Joshua 21 refers to *rā'šê 'abôt hallewiyyîm* "the heads of the patriarchal ['houses'] of the Levites," and *rā'šê 'abôt hammattôt libnê Yiśrā'ēl* "the heads of the patriarchal ['houses'] of the tribes of the Israelites." But, beginning in Joshua 21:4, and throughout the primary record itself (Jos 21:5–41), there is no further reference to *'ābôt,* only to *mišpāḥôt,* and to tribes.

Joshua 22 exhibits some distinctive features. In a sense, it may be seen as a spin-off of Numbers 32, Deuteronomy 3, and, further, of Joshua 13 itself. Its relationship with Numbers 1 is most obvious in Joshua 22:13–20, where both the *bêt ʾābôt* as a unit and the *neśîʾîm* as tribal leaders figure prominently. Of particular interest is the report that a delegation consisting of Phinehas, son of Eleazar, the priest, along with ten *neśîʾîm,* each the head of his own *bêt ʾābôt,* were dispatched to the two and one-half Transjordanian tribes. They castigated them for having erected an altar in Transjordan, and for refusing to settle west of the Jordan (Jos 22:13–14). This precisely resonates Numbers 1:4, and suggests that the relevant passage in Joshua 22 was produced by the same authors or redactors who composed Numbers 1. To put it simply: In the primary, priestly genealogies and tribal traditions of Numbers, as in most of Joshua, the *bêt ʾābôt* is introduced only on the redactional level. In Numbers 1, 3–4 the *bêt ʾābôt* is integral, or at least accommodated to the tribal structure. Numbers 3 is instructive in this regard. It informs us that the *mišpāḥāh* "clan" originated with the grandsons of the tribal eponym, not with his sons, as is true in Numbers 26. For example: We are told that Levi had three sons, Gershon, Kohath and Merari. It is only their sons, however, the grandsons of the original tribal eponym, who are listed according to *mišpāḥôt* (Num 3:18–20a). The deferral to the generation of grandsons is explained by the intrusion in Numbers 3 and 4 of the *bêt ʾāb* "patriarchal 'house,' " which was formed by the son of the original eponym. Thus, for example: *ûnéśîʾ bêt ʾāb laggēršūnnî—X* "the chief of the Gershonite patriarchal 'house' is X" (Num 3:23).

This generational sequence implies that tribes developed from one undifferentiated group, as we have it in Genesis 46, and then split into as many patriarchal "houses" as the eponym had sons. Subsequently, clans formed, with each clan being named after a grandson of the original eponym. In any given generation, in synchronic perspective, each *bêt ʾāb* was led by a *nāśîʾ*, and included several *mišpāḥôt.* This is a neat but artificial construction, one not shared, for the most part, by other genealogical and tribal records. Thus, there is no reference whatsoever to the *bêt ʾābôt* in the Levitical musters of Numbers 26:57–62, only to *mišpāḥôt.* This shows that this brief record conforms to the overall *mišpāḥāh* orientation of Numbers 26. It would be logical, therefore, to regard Numbers 26:57–62 as the primary source for the Levitical musters, and to conclude that Numbers 3–4 represent the expansion and enhancement of that source. It is pursuant to this expansion that Numbers 3:32 informs the reader, in anticipation, that Eleazar, Aaron's son and to-be successor as High Priest, the great-grandson of Levi, was *neśîʾ neśîʾê hallēwî* "the chief of the chieftains of the Levites" (Num 3:32), namely the head of all the patriarchal "houses" of the tribe of Levi. Similar anticipatory information is provided in the Levitical genealogy of Exodus 6:16–25, which leads all the way to Phinehas, son of Eleazar!

A review of the textual lineup of the Book of Numbers suggests the following: Numbers 26, minus its introduction (Num 26:1–4a), its addendum (Num 26:52–56), and its postscripts (Num 26:63–65), is the priestly source underlying the Levitical genealogies and musters of Numbers 3–4, and also the partial genealogy of Exodus 6:14–25. As for Numbers 1, it is clearly secondary with respect to Numbers 26, combining a list of tribal chieftains, of the Reubenite (cf. Num 13:1–16) rather than of the Judahite tradition, and adding musters undoubtedly adapted from Numbers 26. Ultimately all of the priestly genealogies of the Israelites, as a people, that are preserved in the Pentateuch go back to Genesis 46:8–37, and resemble other priestly genealogies in Genesis 10 and 36. Thus, the earlier record of Genesis 46 begins with the words: "These are the names of the Israelites, Jacob and his descendants, who entered Egypt." In turn, Numbers 26:4b states: "The Israelites who came out of the land of Egypt." As explained in the Notes to Numbers 26:4b, the Masoretic division into *Pesûqîm* obscures the fact that, most probably, Numbers 26:4b originally stood apart as the caption or title of the census list. This original position has been restored in the translation.

What all of this means is that Numbers 26:4b–51 was originally a record of the Israelites who left Egypt, not of their descendants who were now ready to enter the Promised Land. This record was shifted to a textual position corresponding to the end of the Wilderness Period, and construed as a later census. New records were accordingly composed for the beginning of that period, and these are preserved in Numbers 1 and 3–4. We should, therefore, read Numbers 26 in more than one dimension. In situ, we are required to translate the caption: *ûbenê Yiśrā’ēl hayyōṣe’îm mē’ereṣ Miṣrayim* in Numbers 26:4b as: "The descendants of the Israelites who came out of the land of Egypt." But we experience a time warp, remaining aware of the likelihood that Numbers 26:4b–51 originally constituted a priestly record of the Israelites of the Exodus, and in that dimension we would translate: "The Israelites who came out of the land of Egypt."

COMMENT 3:
THE LITERARY-HISTORICAL RAMIFICATIONS OF THE TRIBAL TRADITIONS IN NUMBERS 26

The Book of Numbers preserves traditions of Israelite settlement in Transjordan attributable to JE. These are found in Numbers 21, and in parts of Numbers 32, and are discussed in the appropriate sections of the Commentary. For the rest, the tribal traditions of Numbers pertaining to the Israelite settlement of Canaan proper, west of the Jordan, are all attributable to the priestly school, and reflect several strata of composition, as has already been explained. The question to be addressed here may be formulated as follows: Where did all of the socioeconomic structures and census data preserved in the diverse priestly sections of Numbers originate?

The most common, and probably the most ancient biblical formula for classifying or identifying members of a clan, tribe or nation, and one basic to Numbers 26, is: *bene* X (= eponym). Example: *benê Reʾûbēn* "the sons/descendants of Reuben." The *bene* X formula expresses affiliation, both literally and figuratively, and interacts freely with other formulas. One also finds the gentilic formula: *ha* + eponym + gentilic suffix, with collective force. For example: *hā-Reʾûbēnî* "the Reubenites." A tribe may be identified simply by its eponym, for example: *Reʾûbēn.*

Enter the *mišpāḥāh.* There are indications that in relatively early periods, the *mišpāḥāh* was regarded as the primary component of the tribe, and was at times synonymous with the term *šēbeṭ* itself (Deut 29:17, Judg 13:2, 17:7, 18:2, 11, 19, 21:24, 1 Sam 9:21). In fact, it was customary to extend the notion of the *mišpāḥāh,* as a kinship category, to nations and peoples (Gen 28:14). In the northern Israelite account of 1 Samuel 10, which tells of the selection of Saul for kingship, we read that the prophet Samuel mustered all of the Israelite tribes and *ʾalāpîm,* an alternate term for "clans," and proceeded to identify God's chosen king. In so doing, he first identified the tribe as Benjamin, and then the *mišpāḥāh* as that of Matri, finally identifying Saul, son of Kish (1 Sam 10:20–21). This account is resonated in Joshua 7:14–19, where an offender was entrapped by being identified as belonging to a certain tribe, then to a certain *mišpāḥāh,* then to a certain *bayit* "household"; in that case, his immediate family (Westbrook 1991:12–14). The principal difference between the earlier account in 1 Samuel and the later resonance in the Book of Joshua is, precisely, the introduction of the *bayit* into the system, and this leads directly to a discussion of the *bêt ʾāb/ʾābôt* "patriarchal 'house.' "

In the first instance, the composite term *bêt ʾāb* derives from the simple term, *bayit* "home," and expresses a spatial conception. It designates the domicile or place of residence of the patriarchal family, including the land it owns. The term *bêt ʾēm* "matriarchal 'house' " is also attested, by the way, in Ruth 1:8 and Song of Songs 3:4. The *locus classicus* for the spatial connotation of *bêt ʾāb* is Genesis 12:1: "Betake yourself from your land, and from the place of your birth, and from your father's 'house' (*ûmibbêt ʾābîkā*) to the land I will show you." Now, the terms *bayit* and *bêt ʾāb* appropriated a socioeconomic connotation, so that they may concurrently designate the group of related persons who inhabit the same home, or estate; one's kin who live there. Thus, we often render *bayit* "household, family" (Gen 46:27, Exod 1:1), and translate *bêt ʾāb* "patriarchal 'house,' " namely, a family or larger unit headed by a father, or one founded by a father. The term *bayit* also appropriates a political connotation, and often means "royal household, dynasty," as is well known.

In this sense, the term ***bêt 'āb*** is attested in early biblical sources. Examples occur in the Gideon and Abimlelek narratives (Judg 6:27, 9:18), in the Samson cycle (Judg 14:15, 19, 16:31), and frequently in the David stories (1 Sam 17:25, 22:1). In Notes to Numbers 1:2 (Levine 1993:132), it was explained that an Akkadian cognate of Hebrew ***bêt 'āb***, namely, *É (bīt) a-bî*, occurs in the Idrimi inscription of mid-second millennium Syria, indicating its currency in the West Semitic sphere during prebiblical times (Kempinsky and Na'aman 1973:s.v. Idrimi, line 10). As a socioeconomic unit, the biblical ***bêt 'āb*** has attracted the attention of scholars since the beginnings of modern biblical research, and several recent studies have further clarified its character (see C. J. H. Wright 1992, in *ABD*, II:751–769, especially 763–764, and literature cited; S. Smith 1949).

It is important to bear in mind that there is a basic difference in concept between the terms ***mišpāḥāh*** and ***bêt 'āb***. There is nothing in the meaning of the term ***mišpāḥāh*** that implies ownership of land or real property; it is purely a relational, social term expressing kinship, real or fictive. In contrast, the terms ***bêt 'āb*** and its offshoot, ***bêt 'ābôt***, necessarily express a spatial concept, one that they never lose in any extended context. A family or clan could hardly qualify as a ***bêt 'āb*** unless it possessed its own "house," which is to say, its own land and property. What we encounter specifically in the priestly writings of Numbers, and in priest-related sources, such as Joshua, Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles, is the form ***bêt 'ābôt***, where the object of the genitive is pluralized. Technically, plurality attaches to the "fathers," not to the "house," so that the form ***bêt 'ābôt***, properly analyzed, designates a single socioeconomic unit. It may mean "house of fathers," connoting a patrilocal kinship group, large enough to be descended from more than a single father; or it may be taken abstractly to mean "fatherly, patriarchal 'house.' " Thus, in the priestly version of the Pesaḥ account, there is reference to ***śeh lebêt 'ābôt, seh labbayit*** "a lamb for each patriarchal 'house,' [or] a lamb for each household" (Exod 12:3). Also note Numbers 1:4: ***'îš rō'š lebêt 'abōtāw hû'*** "a man who is head of his own patriarchal 'house' " (cf. Num 1:44).

Usage of the term ***bêt 'ābôt*** is nevertheless complicated. In priestly writings, the two forms, ***bêt 'ab*** and ***bêt 'ābôt***, are not clearly differentiated. Priestly authors used both forms, ***bêt 'ab*** and ***bêt 'abot***, with singular force, and what is more, it is likely that they had the same projected social structure in mind for each. They and the priest-related authors of Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles had undoubtedly introduced the pluralized form, ***bêt 'ābôt*** at a late date. It is unattested in early biblical sources, and reflects the growing tendency toward pluralization in late biblical Hebrew. Perhaps later writers favored the unambiguous form ***bêt 'āb*** when it was necessary to clarify that a single unit, one "patriarchal 'house,' " was intended, not all of the units within a tribe. Note in Numbers 18:1–2 the contrast between *bêt 'ābîkā* "[the members of] your patriarchal 'house,' " referring exclusively to the Aaronide priests, and *šēbeṭ 'ābîkā* "[the members of] your patriarchal tribe," referring to the entire tribe of Levi, to which Aaron belonged (also cf. Neh 1:6). No unambiguous plural form such as *bāttê 'ābôt* is attested. We do find the declined form *bêt 'abôtêhem* (1 Chron 5:13, 2 Chron 17:14), and the determined form *bêt hā'ābôt* (1 Chron 7:40). The most frequent declined form is *bêt 'abōtām* "their patriarchal 'house,' " which often occurs in symmetry with other plural forms, usually with *mišpāḥôt*. For example, Numbers 1:2: "Take a poll of the entire community of the Israelites by their clans (*lemišpeḥōtām*), and their patriarchal 'houses' (*lebêt 'abōtām*)." Functionally, reference is to all of the "houses," as it is to all of the clans. It would seem that for priestly or priest-related writers their own term, *bêt 'ābôt*, often functioned as a bound plural of *bêt 'āb*.

If the term *bêt 'āb*, which survives into later periods, is rooted in the early experience of a landed Israelite population, where does the observably later term *bêt 'ābôt* originate, since it cannot be explained initially as a plural form of *bêt 'āb*? It is arguable that like other early social and political terms, like *nāśî'* "chieftain," it was revived by writers of the priestly school who altered its form to *bêt 'ābôt*, in line with late biblical Hebrew usage, and so as to lend an aura of antiquity to contemporary socioeconomic structures. As noted above, outside of Torah literature and Joshua, we encounter the form *bêt 'ābôt*, or pluralized variant forms such as *hā'ābôt*, only in Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles. Even Ezekiel does not know of it, although he employs the element *bayit* profusely in various classifications. In this light, it is reasonable to suggest that the term *bêt 'ābôt* was introduced by postexilic writers to designate the ancestral clans of the returning Judeans, now repossessing the lands they had owned before the Exile. At least, this would have been the theoretical or historiographic basis for the term. Thus, we read in Ezra 2:59–60 that among *benê hammedînāh* "the people of the province," namely, the exiled Judeans (Ezra 2:1), were three kinship groups (*benê* X groups), who were "unable to identify their patriarchal 'house' (*bêt 'abōtām*), or their lineage (*zar'ām*), as to whether they were of Israelite descent" (cf. Neh 7:61). In this case, the term *bêt 'ābôt* would appear to refer to a single unit, although some ambiguity remains on this score. In any event, the problem of these clans in claiming their real estate paralleled the problem, taken up next in Ezra 2, of certain scions of priestly families who could not produce genealogical papers, and were consequently disqualified from the priesthood (Ezra 2:61–63).

1 Chronicles 7:40, a postscript to the section on the clans of the tribe of Asher (1 Chron 7:30–40), is also a telling source for tracing the introduction of the term *bêt 'ābôt* in postexilic biblical literature. It reads:

> All of these Asherites, chiefs of the patriarchal ‘houses’ (*rā’šê bêt hā’ābôt*), select men of the warrior class (*gibbôrê ḥʿayyālîm*), heads of the chieftains (*rā’šê hannеśî’îm*), registered genealogically according to their fighting unit (*baṣṣābā’ bammilḥāmāh*). Their number: 26,000 men.

In the passage cited, it is probable that the form *bêt hā’ābôt* was, indeed, understood as a bound plural. It is particularly interesting to encounter the pluralized form, *gibbôrê ḥayyālîm*, frequent in this chapter (1 Chron 7:5, 7, 9, 11), in place of standard *gibbore (ha)ḥayil* “members of the warrior class,” which occurs alongside it in the same chapter (1 Chron 7:2), and elsewhere in Chronicles (1 Chron 9:13, 12:8, 21, 25). In effect, we are being told that the listed Asherites were heads of their patriarchal “houses,” as well as head *neśî’îm* in the tribal structure. Compare Numbers 7:2: *neśî’ê Yiśrā’ēl rā’šê bêt ’abōtām* “the chieftains of Israel, the heads of their patriarchal houses.” Although *ṣābā’* “personnel; workforce; fighting unit,” referred to in 1 Chron 7:40 does not figure in Numbers 26, it does in Numbers 1, 2, 10 and 31, and prominently so. It represents a major link between the later stratum of priestly writing in Numbers and the traditions of Chronicles. In fact, the classification *yōṣē’ ṣābā’* “eligible for military service; subject to military service” is well known in Chronicles (1 Chronicles 5, 7, 12, and so forth).

We can establish correlations: The priestly stratum represented by Numbers 1 and 2, and by redactional components elsewhere in Numbers, as well as the redactional elements in Joshua 13–22, all correspond with the integral level in Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles. In those postexilic sources, the *mišpāḥāh* survives in a limited way, but the *bêt ’ābôt* has taken over. In literary-historical terms, the situation may be described as follows: The primary priestly stratum in Numbers and the primary stratum in Joshua 13–22 antedate Chronicles. These primary texts combine territorial records, which predominate in Joshua, with genealogical lists, which predominate in Numbers, though both are common to the two books.

If the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the priestly *bêt ’ābôt* traditions is the postexilic restoration, cast by priestly writers, and those of the Chronicler’s school in a way that establishes property rights through patrimony, what is the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the priestly *mišpāḥāh* traditions in Torah literature? Since the Israelite *mišpāḥāh* exhibits such diverse realizations in biblical literature, and figures from the earliest through to the latest sources, it is difficult to pinpoint the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the *mišpāḥāh* traditions encountered in Numbers 26. One notes that two discrete formulas are basic to Numbers 26: (1) *benê* X *lemišpeḥōtām* “the descendants of X according to their clans,” and variations of the same; (and (2) *le* + eponym, *mišpaḥat ha* + X + gentilic, as for example: *lemākîr mišpaḥat hammākîrî* “Affiliated with Machir, the Machirite clan”

(Num 26:29), and variations of the same. Neither of these formulas has very much currency outside of the priestly genealogies of the Pentateuch and Joshua. In fact, only the former is current in Joshua 13–22, but not the latter (see only Jos 7:17, merely a resonance of 1 Sam 10:21). Nor is either formula frequent in Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles, as is the late form *bêt ʾābôt*. They are most likely the creation of the priestly writers of the Pentateuch and Joshua, and antedate Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles. The interaction of *mišpāḥāh* and *bêt ʾāb*, like that obtaining between *mišpāḥāh* and terms for "tribe," actually begins quite early in biblical literature (Gen 24:38, 40 and possibly 1 Sam 18:18). Thus, *mišpaḥat bêt Šāʾûl* "the clan of the 'house' of Saul" (2 Sam 16:5) is resonated in postexilic Zechariah 12:12–14, in a series of similar designations: *mišpaḥat bêt Dāwîd, mišpaḥat bêt Nātān, mišpaḥat bêt Lēwî,* followed by *mišpaḥat haššimʿî*, which most closely parallels the gentilic formulation of Numbers 26, and Numbers 3. To summarize: There is nothing to counterindicate the postexilic *Sitz-im-Leben* of the *mišpāḥāh* tradition of Numbers 26, but the possibility of an earlier origin cannot be dismissed.

It is now proper to inquire as to what it is that we are reading about in Numbers 26, realistically speaking. We are reading priestly expressions of a postexilic mentality, one that developed in several stages, and that retrojected contemporary ideologies of the postexilic restoration to Jerusalem and Judea, subsequent to the Edict of Cyrus, into the early history of Israel. The legitimation of the restoration was expressed in many modes, including traditions of the Exodus, the wilderness migrations, and the conquest and settlement of Canaan. We are being told that like the several waves of returnees from Babylonia, those early ancestors who entered Canaan after the death of Moses had also been mustered and identified according to tribes and clans, and patriarchal 'houses.' " In fact, they were the direct descendants of the Patriarchs, the original *ʾābôt*; they were of the same *mišpāḥôt* and even the same *bayit*, the 'house' of Jacob (Gen 46:27, Exod 1:2). It is not fortuitous that the loyal Hebrew midwives in Egypt, who feared God, were to be rewarded with *bāttîm* "houses" in the Promised Land (Exod 1:21).

PART V.

NUMBERS 27: THE DAUGHTERS OF ZELOPHEHAD AND THE TERRITORIES OF MANASSEH

◆

INTRODUCTION

Numbers 27 deals with two discrete subjects, and accordingly may be divided into two sections:

(1) Numbers 27:1–11—the episode of Zelophehad's daughters. An Israelite named Zelophehad had passed away in the wilderness, leaving five daughters but no son. The reader was introduced to the five daughters of Zelophehad in the record of the second census, Numbers 26, within the list of the Josephite tribes, more specifically of the clans of Manasseh (Num 26:33). There it is stated that Zelophehad had left only daughters, but no male heirs, so that if, as Numbers 26:52–55 prescribe, the land is to be apportioned to those listed by names (*šēmôt*), what would happen to the "name" (*šēm*) of Zelophehad? Thus it is that Numbers 27 follows directly upon the census of Numbers 26.

As Numbers 27 opens, Zelophehad's daughters approach Moses and Eleazar, Aaron's son and designated successor as High Priest, and request to be declared their father's heirs in the upcoming apportionment of the land of Canaan. The apportionment process will be recounted primarily in Numbers 34–35, with the Transjordanian settlement being the subject of Numbers 32. The daughters of Zelophehad anticipated that they would be left without a family inheritance, and took action to preempt that likelihood (Num 27:1–5). Moses brought the matter before YHWH, whereupon he received a divine communication instructing him to accede to the request. There then follows a statement of law: As an exception to the rule that only a son qualifies as his father's direct heir, it was ordered that the ancestral territory of a man who died without leaving a son would pass to his daughter. If he had no daughter, it would pass down the line in an accepted sequence; first, to the brothers of the deceased, then to his father's brothers, and, finally, to his closest consanguineal relative within the clan (Num 27:6–11).

(2) Numbers 27:12–23—God's announcement to Moses that he would die on Mount Abarim after viewing the Promised Land; that he would not live to enter it. This is followed by the appointment of Joshua, son of Nun, as Moses' successor. The harsh decree imposed on Moses is explained as a punishment for his failure to sanctify YHWH by bringing out the waters of Meribath-Kadesh as instructed. Accepting the decree, Moses entreated YHWH to designate a proper leader to succeed him. He was promptly directed to lay his hands on Joshua, in whom God's spirit had been invested. This ceremony took place in view of the entire Israelite community, as Joshua stood before Eleazar, the priest.

Whereas the transfer of leadership from Moses to Joshua is quite readily interpretable, the episode of Zelophehad's daughters is complicated. On the face of it, it appears to be one of several priestly etiologies, narratives whose function it is to introduce innovative legislation. An unprecedented situation arose that challenged accepted practice, and had not been addressed in existing law. The problem was promptly resolved by a direct communication to Moses from God, instructing him on the proper disposition of the case. This is then followed by a more general statement of law. In a similar way, Moses had been instructed to condemn to death a blasphemer who had been brought before him (Lev 24:10–23), as well as an Israelite found gathering wood on the Sabbath (Num 15:32–36). In Numbers 9:1–8, we read that Moses received divine instruction concerning those who were impure or distant from the encampment at the appointed time of the Pesah. Here, the issue was family inheritance in the form of a territory in the Promised Land.

What complicates the present situation is the fact that the provisions of Numbers 27:1–11 are amended in Numbers 36, restricting their application. Strict endogamy was imposed on daughters who inherited their father's land; they were required to marry men of the same "clan" (*mišpāḥāh*), within the same tribe with which their father had been affiliated. The daughters of Zelophehad ended up marrying into the same clan as would have inherited their father's land if there had been no dispensation to start with. In such terms, the dispensation granted to them appears to have been an interim measure. This, then, is the legal enigma, calling for a precise definition of the notion of *šēm* "name" as it pertains to inheritance within nuclear families.

There is, however, a second dimension to the episode of Zelophehad's daughters, exceeding the usual function of a legal etiology. It pertains to the planned allocation of tribal territories in Canaan, more specifically the territory of Manasseh. Clearly, the episode of Zelophehad's daughters is related to the anomalous situation of the tribe of Manasseh, the only one that settled both to the east and to the west of the Jordan. This, then, is the historiographic agenda that was ultimately of greater significance than the legal exception involved. The permanent function of the episode was to legitimate Manassite claims in Canaan proper. The relevant facts will be presented in the Notes, and the larger interpretive problems treated in the Comments.

TRANSLATION

27 [1]The daughters of Zelophehad, son of Hepher, son of Gilead, son of Machir, son of Manasseh, of the clans of Manasseh, son of Joseph, came forward. These are the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, and Hoglah, and Milcah and Tirzah.

[2]They stood before Moses and before Eleazar, the priest, and before the tribal chieftains and the entire community at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, [speaking] as follows:

[3]"Our father died in the wilderness and he was not one of the group that had banded together against YHWH, one of Korah's faction, for he died on account of his own sin. He had no sons.

[4]"Why should our father's name be deleted from within his clan because he had no son? Grant us a land holding among our father's brothers."

[5]Then Moses presented their case before YHWH.

[6]YHWH instructed Moses as follows:

[7]The daughters of Zelophehad speak in truth. By all means, grant them an ancestral landholding among their father's brothers, and transfer their father's ancestral territory to them.

[8]And to the Israelite people speak as follows: If a man should die without having a son, you are to transfer his ancestral territory to his daughter.

[9]Should he have no daughter, you are to grant his ancestral territory to his brothers.

[10]If he, himself, had no brothers, you are to grant his ancestral territory to his father's brothers.

[11]If his father had no brothers, you are to grant his ancestral territory to his consanguineous relative, of his clan, so that he may possess it. This shall be a statute of jurisprudence, as YHWH commanded Moses.

[12]Then YHWH said to Moses: Ascend this mountain, Abarim, and view the land that I have granted to the Israelite people.

[13]Once you have seen it you will be gathered to your kinsmen; you, too, just as Aaron, your brother, was gathered.

[14]For you disobeyed me in the wilderness of Zin during the insurrection of the community, failing to affirm my sanctity in their sight by means of the water. Those were the waters of Meribath-Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin.

[15]Moses then spoke to YHWH as follows:

[16]"May YHWH, divine ruler of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a person over the community,

[17]"One who will go forth ahead of the community and return at their head; who will lead them forth and bring them back, so that YHWH's community may not be as flocks that have no shepherd!"

[18]Then YHWH instructed Moses: Summon unto you Joshua, son of Nun, a person possessed of spirit, and lay your hand on him.

[19]Station him before Eleazar, the priest, and before the entire community, and authorize him in their sight.

[20]Confer some of your majesty upon him, so that the entire community of Israel will be obedient [to him].

[21]Before Eleazar, the priest, he shall stand, who shall make oracular inquiry

on his behalf on the ruling of the Urim, in the presence of YHWH. By his command they shall they go out to battle and by his command they shall return home, he and the entire community of Israel.

[22]Moses did as YHWH commanded him. He summoned Joshua, and stationed him before Eleazar, the priest, and before the entire community.

[23]He laid his hands on him, and charged him, just as YHWH commanded through Moses.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 27:1–11: THE CASE OF ZELOPHEHAD'S DAUGHTERS

1. *The daughters of Zelophehad . . . came forward.* On the verb *q-r-b* "to approach, come forward," see below, in the Notes to Numbers 27:5. The name of Zelophehad, especially the names of his daughters, warrant special attention, and have already been explained in the Notes to Numbers 26:31–33. It is, however, only in the present context of the suit brought by the daughters of Zelophehad that the full significance of their names becomes apparent. As specified in the Notes to Numbers 26:28–34, some of the clan names listed in the priestly genealogy of Manasseh are attested in the Samaria Ostraca of the eighth century B.C.E., but as the names of districts in the region of Samaria, not as personal names. Thus, Hoglah and Noah, two of Zelophehad's daughters, are listed as the names of districts or towns in Samaria. The typology by which personal or clan names interact with toponyms is well known, but in the present case it has special implications. It indicates that the legal innovation associated with the family of Zelophehad must be understood in the context of the plan for the settlement of Canaan put forth in several versions by the priestly school. To put it another way: The clan of Zelophehad truly belonged west of the Jordan!

2. *They stood before Moses.* Idiomatic *ʿāmad lipnê* "to stand before" usually connotes the formal stance of those appearing before God to await his judgment (Num 35:12, Deut 19:17), or of those who serve or worship him (Jer 7:10). It also designates those who stand in attendance or service before one in authority (Gen 41:46, Judg 20:28, 2 Kings 5:16, Zech 3:4, and cf. 1 Kings 22:19). Here, the daughters of Zelophehad came before Moses and the leaders of the *ʿēdāh* to press their case (cf. 1 Kings 3:16, Esther 8:4). Aaron had already passed away, and his son, Eleazar, had succeeded him (Num 20:23–29). It is Eleazar who presided over the second census, as we are informed in Numbers 26:1. In Numbers 25, we read that Phinehas, Eleazar's son, was promised a covenant of everlasting priesthood. The priestly writers of Numbers also projected a continuing role for the *neśiʾîm*, the tribal chieftains, in the governance

of the Israelites during the Wilderness Period. They are present at virtually every important occasion.

3. *for he died on account of his own sin.* It is implied that if Zelophehad had, indeed, been one of those devoured by the earth, or consumed by divine fire in the wake of the Korah incident (Numbers 16–17), his name might have been legitimately withdrawn from the register of his tribe, and his lands expropriated. This recalls the law of the *herem*, by which those condemned to death by the judicial process lost title to their estates, which would then be expropriated by the king or the temple. It could be postulated that the lands allotted to members of Korah's *ʿēdāh* would likewise have been expropriated after they had been judged and condemned to death by God. The subtlety of Numbers 27:3 is further enhanced by the fact that in biblical diction, the idiom *ʾîš beḥeṭʾô* + *yāmût/yûmat* "each person shall die/be put to death on account of his own sin," and variations of the same, usually serve to emphasize that substitution is not allowable; that the actual offender must suffer punishment. Thus, for example, sons may not be made to bear the punishment of their fathers' sins (Deut 24:16, 2 Kings 14:6, Ezek 18:4, 20, 2 Chron 25:4).

In fact, the contention of Zelophehad's daughters may revolve around this very point. After all, notwithstanding the sin of the Wilderness Generation, the territory allotted to each family in anticipation of entry into Canaan would be inherited by the second generation, and they would take possession of the land even though their fathers had sinned. Only because Zelophehad had left no son would his "name" be lost. Instead, the estate would be registered in the name of a relative. The daughters of Zelophehad consequently sought a new ruling that would allow daughters to inherit. The concern expressed by Zelophehad's daughters reflects an individualistic mentality, aimed at preserving the "name" of the pater familias, and not a clannish or tribal mentality that would be more concerned with retaining land within the larger, socioeconomic unit. This individualism contrasts with the perspective of Numbers 36, the follow-up of Numbers 27, where additional legislation effectively imposed endogamy on female heirs, a strategy that would prevent the transfer of land inherited by daughters to another tribe (see the Introduction to Numbers 36).

4. *"Why should our father's name be deleted . . . ?"* The key word in the statement of Zelophehad's daughters is the verg *g-r-ʿ*, which was part of the ancient mathematical vocabulary. It means "to subtract, withdraw an amount or item." In Deuteronomy 4:2, 13:1, and Koheleth 3:14, it contrasts with *hôsîp* "to add, increase." The idiom *ʾal tigraʿ dābār* "Do not leave a single thing out" in Jeremiah 26:2 is rephrased in Esther 6:10 as: *ʾal tappēl dābār* "Do not drop a single thing out." The Niphal form, *nigraʿ* means "to be subtracted, deleted, withdrawn" by calculation, as in Leviticus 27:18: "The priest shall reckon for him (*wḥiššab lô*) . . . and it shall be subtracted from the equivalent (*wenigraʿ meʿerkekā*)." In Numbers 36:3–4, the Niphal *wenigreʿāh* "it shall be subtracted," contrasts with *wenôsepāh* "It shall be added."

The concern expressed is for the "name" (Hebrew *šēm*) of the father, which is a way of saying "title to his land," more precisely, "the registration of land in the name of the immediate family," which is to say, the family that bore the father's name. If Zelophehad had left a son, he would have inherited the family land, and it would have been registered under the name of "X, son of Zelophehad." Under the existing system, with no male heir, the land would have been inherited by Zelophehad's brothers, or their heirs, who would give their own names to it. It should be noted that Hebrew *mišpāḥāh* designates an extended family, usually a clan. This is suggested by the daughter's reference to the fact that their father's name would be deleted from the register of his *mišpāḥāh,* which consisted of his brothers and uncles, and other consanguineal and even affinal relatives. Thus, the daughters of Zelophehad insisted on receiving an *'aḥuzzāh* alongside the estates of their paternal uncles. One senses the forcefulness of their request.

In the first instance, the term *'aḥuzzāh* designates "acquired land," namely, land acquired through grant or purchase. Once incorporated with the territory of the clan, however, an *'aḥuzzāh* would be transmitted as an inheritance (Levine 1993a). The verb *'-ḥ-z* does not, in this case, connote conquest or seizure, but rather legal acquisition. It is a term widely used in priestly law, as in the land-tenure codes of Leviticus 25 and 27, and functions as a principal term of reference in the Numbers traditions regarding the apportionment of Canaan to the Israelite tribes (Levine, 1989b:278–279). These traditions are preserved in Numbers 32 and 35, in Joshua 21–22, sections deriving from the priestly school, and in the land-allocation program set forth in Ezekiel 44–48. Hebrew *'aḥuzzāh* effectively replaces earlier terms such as *naḥalāh* "possession, territory, ancestral land," and *yeruššāh* "possession." Later priestly authors often used *'ahuzzah* as a synonym for *naḥalāh,* leveling the primary distinction between the two terms (see Notes to Num 35:1).

This is how the term *'aḥuzzāh* is being used here in the general sense of "territory, land." That this is the case is indicated by Numbers 27:7, below, where instructions are given to allot to Zelophehad's daughters *'aḥuzzat naḥalāh* "an ancestral land holding." The implicit synonymity of the two terms is brought out more clearly in Numbers 35–36, where the agenda is the actual apportionment of Canaan. This is, in fact, just another indication that Numbers 27:1–11 anticipate the apportionment program outlined in Numbers 34–35, and as it affects Transjordan, in Numbers 32. In other words, the daughters of Zelophehad did not want to be excluded from the apportionment process simply because their father had left no son to inherit his land.

5. *Then Moses presented their case before* YHWH. The verb *q-r-b* "to approach, draw near," already encountered in Numbers 27:1, above, and employed in any of several stems, is integral to the juridical process as it is formulated in biblical law. Thus, the Niphal form, *niqrab,* describes the ap-

proach of one summoned to court (Exod 22:7, Jos 7:14), whereas the Piel, *qērēb,* may mean to bring a legal suit (Isa 41:21). The sense of the Hiphil, *wayyaqrēb* "he presented," in the present verse, is unusual, and most nearly resembles the sense of presentation, expressed as "bringing one near" (Exod 28:1, Num 3:6, 18:2), except that in this instance it is the "case, suit" (*mišpāṭ*) that is presented, not the persons involved in it. What we have is an instance of metonymy. The usage of Hebrew *mišpāṭ* "case, suit" is typical (1 Kings 8:45, 49, Micah 7:9, Ezek 21:32). Moses did not employ any oracular method of inquiry, and it is to be assumed that he had direct access to God, and simply stated the case to him and requested a decision of law. It is not mere coincidence that Numbers 27:5 resonates with Numbers 27:1: *wattiqrabnāh* > *wayyaqrēb.* First, the daughters of Zelophehad *approach,* and then Moses *presents* them before YHWH.

7. *The daughters of Zelophehad speak in truth.* The idiom *kēn . . . dōbēr* "speaks correctly, in truth" is limited to the present verse, and to its resonance in Numbers 36:5, where the same is said of the Josephites: *kēn maṭṭēh benê Yôsēp dōberîm* "The tribe of the Josephites speak correctly." This further tightens the thematic link between Numbers 27:1–11 and Numbers 36, showing that the latter is a spin-off of the former. The same locution is found in Exodus 10:29: *kēn dibbartā* "You have spoken in truth" (Exod 10:29). Similar language is also employed in Job 42:7: "For you have not spoken to me truthfully (*kî lō' dibbartem 'ēlay nekônāh*)."

8. *If a man should die.* The dispensation to the daughters of Zelophehad is made the rule, and what follows in verses 8–11 is a statement of law permanently applicable to all Israelites. The law is stated casuistically, albeit in an infrequent formulation: *'îš kî* "If a man should—" (cf. Num 30:3). The clause *ûbēn 'ên lô* is circumstantial: "without having a son." It is a subordinate part of the protasis.

you are to transfer

It may be significant that the verb used to express the bequeathng of territory by a father to his daughter, in the absence of a son, is *he'ebîr* "to transfer," whereas in the following verses, the verb used to express the same process, from father to other male heirs, brothers and paternal uncles, is *nātan* "to grant." Whereas *nātan* reflects normal usage respecting the granting of land, the verb *he'ebîr,* in this sense, is virtually restricted to the present verse. The implication is that something unusual is being prescribed, from a legal point of view.

9–11. *Should he have no daughter.* The new legislation is spelled out in detail. The usage of Hebrew *'āḥ* is literal, namely "brother," not "kinsman" or the like, and the same is so when reference is to "his father's brothers." The classification *še'ērô haqqārōb 'ēlāw* "his consanguineal relatives," and related forms, are basic to priestly legislation. According to Leviticus 21:2, a priest of the Aaronide family, who is normally prohibited from defiling himself by attending to burials, is given a dispensation to do so in the case of "his consanguineal relatives," where the wording is identical to what is stated here. Hebrew *šeʾēr* means "flesh" (Micah 3:2, Prov 5:11), and like such terms as Hebrew *bāsʿār* "meat," with which it is occasionally combined (Lev 18:6, 25:49), may refer to close family relatives (Levine 1989b:142, s.v. Lev 21:2). In fact, the line of inheritance outlined here resembles the order of clan obligations pertaining to *geʾūllāh*, the redemption of land, as prescribed in Leviticus 25:47–49. In the event that an Israelite had defaulted to a non-Israelite on his *ʾaḥūzzāh* that had been pledged to debt, it was the duty of members of his family to come to his assistance. The list of family members begins with "one of his brothers," and continues with his paternal uncle, his first cousin on his father's side, "or [one of] his consanguineal [relatives] of his clan (*ʾô miššeʾēr besʿārô mimmišpaḥtô*)."

so that he may possess it.

At times, the verb *y-r-š* bears the sense of linear inheritance (Gen 15:3–4, 8, 21:10, Num 36:8, Jer 49:1), as is the situation here, but its primary sense is that of physical obsession by any of a number of means (Levine 1983).

The composite term *ḥuqqat mišpāṭ* "a statute of jurisprudence" occurs only here and in Numbers 35:29, in the laws of homicide. It prescribes the norm by which cases are to be adjudicated (cf. Num 9:14). The statement begins elliptically: "This shall be," which is to say that all that has been prescribed up to this point shall apply. Cf. Numbers 15:19, and Notes.

as YHWH commanded Moses.

This is a characteristically priestly postscript, intended to emphasize that all of the specifics of the law had been commanded by God, and transmitted directly to Moses (Levine 1965).

NOTES TO NUMBERS 27:12–23: THE TRANSFER OF LEADERSHIP FROM MOSES TO JOSHUA

12. In Numbers 27:12–14, we read that Moses is to be allowed to view the land into which he will not be granted entry.

Ascend this mountain, Abarim

The precise location of *har haʿabārîm* is difficult to pinpoint. In Numbers 33:47, the text reads: *behārê ʿabārîm lipnê Nebô* "in the mountains of Abarim, facing Nebo," and the plural construct, *mĕhārê hăʿabārîm* "from the mountains of Abarim," recurs in the following verse, Numbers 33:48. In Deuteronomy 32:49, also assigned to the priestly source, the two names are equated in apposition: "Ascend this mountain, Abarim, Mount Nebo (*har hā-ʿAbārîm hazzeh har Nebô*)." The location of Mount Nebo is known (Piccirillo 1992, in *ABD* IV:1056–1058), so that most likely *ʿAbārîm* is a more general designation for the surrounding mountainous area, to be identified with *ʿIyyê hā-ʿAbārîm* in Numbers 21:11, 33:44 (see Notes to Num 21:11). There may have been differing traditions about where Moses stood when he beheld the Promised Land before his death, which would explain the fairly obvious effort on the part of priestly writers to blend them.

13–14. *you will be gathered to your kinsmen.* For the idiomatic sense of "being gathered unto one's kin," see Notes to Numbers 20:24, the very source resonated here in comparing the death of the two leaders, Moses and Aaron. The background of Numbers 20 continues to emerge through reference to the earlier failure of Moses and Aaron to bring forth water from the rock (Num 20:12–13).

15–16. Here begins the record of the transfer of power from Moses to Joshua, which carries through to the end of the chapter.

"YHWH, divine ruler of the spirits of all flesh,"

In Numbers 16:22, the only other attestation of this statement, *El (ʾēl)* occurs instead of YHWH. In Numbers 16, the context suggests a demand for divine justice, whereas here, one could say that Moses is appealing to the attribute of divine providence or mercy. To leave the Israelites without a leader, like flocks without a shepherd, would be unkind, to say the least. Nevertheless, in both passages, the appeal is addressed to YHWH as the god of the spirits of all flesh. This is another way of saying that he is the just ruler of the whole world, which is how Abraham expressed the same idea (Gen 18:23–25).

Notwithstanding the numerous nuances attendant upon the Hebrew word *rûaḥ*, reference to "the spirits of all flesh" in this verse and in Numbers 16:22 recalls the language of Genesis 6:17: The flood to be brought by God would destroy *kol bāʾsār ʾašer bô rûaḥ ḥayyim* "all flesh in which there is the 'breath' of life" (cf. Gen 7:15). It is likely, therefore, that the biblical author put words into Moses' mouth through which he alludes to his own death in a mood of resignation. It is equivalent to saying that it is YHWH who determines who shall live and who shall die, and when this will happen, and for what reason. It is God who controls the destiny of the soul. Thus, Koheleth ponders: "Who knows, as regards the 'spirit' of humans (*rûaḥ benê hāʾādām*)—does it ascend on high, and the spirit of the animal (*rûaḥ habbehēmāh*)—does it descend downward, into the earth?" (Koh 3:21). Here, Moses acknowledges God's power without complaint. This contrasts with the tone of Deuteronomy 3:23–25, where Moses pleads desperately to be allowed to cross the Jordan into the Promised Land (see Notes to Num 16:22; Levine 1993:415).

17. *"One who will go forth ahead of the community."* The interplay of the forms *yāṣāʾ* "to go forth," and Hiphil *hôṣîʾ* "to lead, bring out," suggests mili-

tary movements, and characterizes the role of the military leader, whether divine or human. In the heroic tradition, the God of Israel is said "to go forth" at the head of Israel's forces to assure them of victory (Judg 4:14, 2 Sam 5:24), whereas the armies, themselves, "go forth" to do battle (Deut 20:1, 21:10, 28:25, 2 Kings 19:9). As a reflex, the Hiphil *hôṣîʾ* describes the action of a commander, whether divine or human (Isa 40:26, 2 Sam 5:2, 1 Chron 11:2, and see below, Num 27:21).

"as flocks that have no shepherd!"

The characterization of a leader as a shepherd is one of the oldest images in human culture, as is the casting of human groupings as flocks and herds. The diction of this verse recalls 1 Kings 22:17, where the immediate context suggests defeat and the routing of a fighting force. Also cf. Ezekiel 34:5, 8, where forced migration and exile are similarly expressed.

18. In Exodus 33:11 (assigned to the Elohist) and in Numbers 11:28, Joshua is referred to as Moses' *mešārēt* "attendant," which suggests a role in the administration of the Israelite people (see Notes to Num 11:28; Levine 1993:326). Joshua's military role is already evident in Exodus 17:9–14, where he leads the Israelite forces in the Amalekite war, and the same role is projected for him in Deuteronomy 3:21, 28, where the promise of victory in Canaan is stated dramatically (cf. Deut 31:3, 14, 23). The particularly priestly tone informing the present record is echoed in Numbers 32:28, where Eleazar, the chief priest, has a role in mustering the Israelite people alongside Joshua.

a person possessed of spirit

Here, Hebrew *rûaḥ* "spirit" would appear to represent an abbreviation, either of *rûaḥ* YHWH "the spirit of YHWH," the potent spirit alighting upon or clothing a hero (Judg 3:10, 11:29, 13:25), or of *rûaḥ ʾelōhîm* "the spirit of God." (Cf. Gen 41:38—said of Joseph; Exod 31:2, 35:31—said of Bezalel, the inspired craftsman.) This spirit translates into skill and wisdom. Thus, Joshua is said to be full of *rûaḥ ḥokmāh*, "the spirit of skill," in Deuteronomy 34:9.

Empowerment through the laying on of hands (or of one hand) was a widespread practice in ancient Israel, and was known as well among the Hittites (D. Wright 1986). Thus, the Israelites, through their representatives, laid their hands on the Levites as they dedicated them to cultic service (Num 8:10, and Notes, in Levine 1993:275). The effect of this act was to transfer authority or jurisdiction, and it is for this very reason that priests and even ordinary Israelites laid their hands on sacrificial offerings (Lev 1:4, passim (Levine 1989b:5–6, s.v. Lev 1:4).

19. *Station him.* A comparison with the dedication of the Levites is further suggested by use of the verb *haʿamēd* "Station!" in the present verse, because that is what Moses was instructed to do in Numbers 8:13: "You shall station the Levites" (*wehaʿamdtā ʾet hallewiyyîm*) in front of Aaron," etc. Usage of this verb is frequent in priestly prescriptions (Lev 14:11, 16:7, 27:11, Num 5:16).

and authorize him in their sight.

In certain of its usages, the verb *ṣiwwāh* "to command" has the sense of empowering or appointing someone to a position of authority. Thus, the God of Israel variously empowers leaders and prophets over his people (2 Sam 7:7, 11, 1 Kings 1:35).

20. *Confer some of your majesty upon him.* Moses is commanded to confer some of his *hôd* "majesty" on Joshua, so that he would also be obeyed by the people. Hebrew *hôd* is said both of God and of earthly kings and heroes. It is an aura that commands awe and respect (see Comments).

21. ***who shall make oracular inquiry on his behalf.*** The oracular role of the chief priest is highlighted. The sense of the present verse is that it was also the duty of Joshua, in his role as leader of the Israelites, to make oracular inquiry through the good services of the chief priest. It is worth noting that Moses was never explicitly instructed to do the same. As explained above, in Notes to Numbers 27:6, Moses usually received direct responses to his inquiries from YHWH, and hence did not require the use of divination to that end. Here, the text mentions only Urim, but reference is obviously to the pair, the Urim and Thummim. It is possible that the word Thummim dropped out through a copyist's error (see Levine 1989b:50, s.v. Lev 8:8). It was the role of the chief priest to render oracular verdicts, and this is the specialized sense of the general term *mišpāṭ* "justice, judgment," in the present verse. Exodus 28:30 informs us that Aaron was to wear the Urim and Thummim on his person, encased in the pocket of "the breastplate of judgment" (Hebrew *ḥōšen hammišpāṭ*) whenever he entered the Sanctuary. In that way, he would literally wear the instruments for rendering a verdict on behalf of the Israelites on his heart.

In form, the Urim and Thummin may have been flat stones, like dice or lots, and examples of the same have been discovered by archaeologists. In 1 Samuel 14:43, the verb that describes their manipulation is ***happîlû*** "Throw down!" In fact, casting lots appears to have been the only form of divination sanctioned in the official monotheistic cult, according to the biblical evidence. The term *tūmmîm* clearly derives from *t-m-m* "to be complete, innocent," and if both lots "came up" with this indication, the response was in the affirmative. On this basis, and assuming a binary system, the response indicated by *ûrîm* would be negative, and it has been suggested that this term derives from the verb *ʾ-r-r* "to curse," but this is not certain. 1 Samuel 14 relates how Saul, king of Israel, once used the Urim and Thummim to trap those guilty of disobeying his orders. When the process identified his own son, Jonathan, he cried out: ***hābāh tāmîm*** "Show innocence," or as the Septuagint reads: "Show Thummim!" (McCarter 1980:247).

22–23. On the compliance clause, *kaʾašer ṣiwwāh* YHWH "as YHWH commanded," see Notes to Numbers 27:11, above.

COMMENTS

The contents of Numbers 27 and 36 are interrelated in large part, and for this reason the two chapters will be commented upon as one. To be specific: Numbers 27:1–11, containing the statement of law concerning the right of daughters to inherit their fathers' estates in cases where a man died without leaving sons, and the provisions of Numbers 36, which qualify that right, insisting that the daughters in question marry within their own tribe, are integrally related. The rest of Numbers 27 (verses 12–23) records the transfer of leadership from Moses to Joshua, pursuant to God's announcement to Moses that he would not live to enter the Promised Land. This section will be commented upon first.

COMMENT 1: LEADERSHIP ROLES AND THEIR SANCTIONS: JOSHUA SUCCEEDS MOSES

The symmetry between the two priestly succession accounts, that of Moses, presented here, and that of Aaron, presented in Numbers 20:22–29, has already been noted. In both instances, entry to the Promised Land was denied, and, in both, the passing of the leader is referred to by use of the verb *ne'esap* "to be gathered." (For the nuances of this verb, see Notes to Num 20:24; Levine 1993:494). In both accounts, the harsh judgment of God is explained as punishment for the failure of these two leaders to affirm YHWH's sanctity at the rock. The incident is referred to here as *mê merîbat Qādēš* "the waters of Meribath Kadesh," and in Numbers 20:13 simply as *mê merîbāh* "the Waters of Meribah," in an account of that very incident. In both accounts, of Aaron and Moses, the community was meant to witness what was occurring in the transfer of authority, but the result was different in each case. When Eleazar succeeded Aaron, all that the people actually saw was the ascent to the mountaintop. The subsequent failure of Aaron to return signaled his death on the mountain. The appointment of Joshua took place in full view of the community, and, what is more, was not directly connected with Moses' death.

There are significant phenomenological differences between the two accounts. The priestly succession involved first divestiture and then investiture, as the special vestments and insignia of office were transferred from one person to the other. In the case of Joshua's succession, the laying on of hands was the method of transferring *hôd* "majesty" from one leader to another. Then, too, Eleazar's fitness to succeed his father is conceived as primarily hereditary; he shared in the election of the priestly line. Joshua's fitness is expressed as *rûaḥ* "spirit," a charismatic quality that is divinely endowed. The transfer of leadership from Moses to Joshua bears some resemblance to that from Elijah to Elisha (2 Kings 2). Although there is no explicit reference to the donning of Elijah's mantle (Hebrew *'adderet*) by Elisha, the disciple later performs the same wondrous acts with it after his master ascends to heaven (2 Kings 2:8, 14). At the very least, Elijah's mantle was received by Elisha, and was most probably worn by him, as well.

And yet, both priestly accounts rely on more than one sanction of authority. In the priestly succession from Aaron to Eleazar, Moses exercises the prophetic role, conveying divine authority; his participation is essential for the ceremonious transference of priestly authority. In the account of Joshua's succession, with its prophetic overtones, the new leader is nevertheless instructed to make oracular inquiry through the good offices of the chief priest, thereby also affirming priestly authority. This pertains especially to Joshua's projected role as the military leader who had to decide if and when to go to war, and was consequently in need of oracular guidance. As explained in the Notes to Numbers 27:21, the direct access to divine guidance enjoyed by Moses did not carry over into the life of Joshua who, like Saul and David, and other kings and leaders, had recourse to the services of priests for this purpose.

This relationship is epitomized in the account of the Danite migration, in which a local priest is induced to become the priest of a tribe about to overrun a new territory (Judg 18). In narratives of Saul's battles, there are significant references to the oracular functions of priests. 1 Samuel 14 tells of one of Saul's priests, described as wearing an *'epōd*, a vest of sorts over which, according to priestly tradition, a pouch containing the Urim and Thummim was worn (1 Sam 14:3, Lev 8:7–8). Another priest is said to have actually conducted oracular inquiry as to the advisability of battle (1 Sam 14:36–37). Although it is not stated initially that this priest utilized the Urim and Thummim, that likelihood emerges from the unfolding of the tale, as efforts are undertaken to reveal who had transgressed against Saul's sworn prohibition by using such lots (1 Sam 14:41, and see Notes to Num 27:21). An historical notation in 2 Samuel 7:17–18 lists two of David's attendant priests, and adds that his own sons also served as priests. In the narrative of Absalom's rebellion, priests loyal to David stayed behind in Jerusalem to provide him with intelligence (2 Sam 15:35–36). The same sort of listing of David's appointed priests recurs in 2 Samuel 20:25 and in 1 Kings 4:4 in referring to priests who served under Solomon. The present account of Joshua's succession resonates the historical books, and, in a sense, also echoes the words of Deuteronomy 20:1–7, which enjoin the chief priest to address the Israelite forces before battle.

Whereas the priestly account of succession from Aaron to Eleazar is directly tied to the event of Aaron's death, this is not so in the present account of Joshua's succession. In fact, the priestly source nowhere provides an independent record of Moses' death. This is left to the Deuteronomist, who, in Deuteronomy 34, closes the book with just such an account. It was undoubtedly a priestly redactor who inserted Deuteronomy 34:9 into that account, thereby linking it to Numbers 27:

> And Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands upon him, so that the Israelites heeded him, and did as YHWH had commanded Moses.

In a similar vein, the Deuteronomist indirectly links the succession of Joshua to Moses' death in Deuteronomy 3:27–28. All that we have in Numbers 27, however, is the announcement that Moses will die (Num 27:12–13), undoubtedly echoing Deuteronomy 3:27–29 and Deuteronomy 34. This statement has the force of a divine decree yet to be fulfilled. The text proceeds to register Moses' sense of resignation, and then moves directly to the subject of Joshua's succession. The succession is designated and implemented in anticipation of Moses' inevitable death, which is not at all unusual, given the predictive character of Torah literature.

It would be instructive to trace the themes that inform the present succession account a bit further. It is interesting to note usage of *hôd* "majesty" with respect to human beings, since it is more frequently a divine attribute. Most likely, the notion of *hôd* as an aura originated in the heroic tradition, where it is said both of God (Hab 3:3, Ps 8:2, 96:6, 104:1, 145:5, Job 37:22, 40:10) and of kings and other heroic personages (Hos 14:7, Ps 21:6, 45:4, Prov 5:9). Most informative is the usage of the term *hôd* in late biblical literature. First Zechariah (6:13) says it of the Davidide of the restoration, and Daniel refers to his own lost *hôd* (Dan 10:8), and also speaks of the defeat of the King of the North as the loss of his *hôd* (Dan 11:21). And so, in a priestly succession account, Moses transfers his *hôd* to Joshua.

In the Notes to Numbers 27:18, the theme of *rûaḥ* "spirit" was discussed briefly. It, too, ultimately originated in the heroic tradition, where we read that the divine spirit infuses the hero (Judg 3:10, 11:29, 13:25). This theme is prominent in Numbers 11:23–35, where some of the "spirit" invested in Moses is withdrawn and conferred on the seventy elders (see Notes to Num 11, and Comment 4: "Moses and Prophetic Leadership," in Levine (1993:338–343). Here, Joshua is represented as one already possessed of *rûaḥ*, a spirit of wisdom and skill, representing a priestly modulation of the heroic theme. Both Deuteronomistic and priestly themes associated with Joshua's role, and with the priestly descendants of Aaron, are resumed in the Book of Joshua, as could have been expected. In Joshua 1:1–9, the book actually begins with an expansive restatement of Deuteronomy 3:27–29, just as Joshua 21–22, in particular, resonate several priestly traditions. Thus, Eleazar's son and successor, Phinehas, assumes a leadership role in resolving the dispute with the Transjordanian tribes (Jos 22:30–34).

It remains to discuss the image of the ideal leader as shepherd (Hebrew *rōʿeh,* in Num 27:17, and see the Notes), an image also explicitly associated with the divine ruler of Israel (Gen 48:15, 49:24, Micah 7:14, Ps 80:2). This subject has been studied extensively, with a recent treatment contributed by J. W. Vancil (1992, in *ABD* V:1187–1190). Vancil provides an overview of biblical and Near Eastern literature, covering ancient Israel, Mesopotamia, Egypt and Greece. Going further, he explores iconographic remains that graphically depict gods and human leaders as shepherds.

The basis of the image lies in the comparison of human communities and nations to flocks and herds, and their leaders, human and divine, to shepherds. This transaction from the pastoral to the human dimension ultimately derives from pastoral economies, yet it has persisted under diverse social, economic and political structures. It dramatizes dependence and projects the dynamics of what may be called "followship," with the strong suggestion of passivity. At the same time, this image places a value on caring and directive leadership aimed at controlling waywardness. Inevitably, as a metaphor applied to divine and human leaders, it implies that human communities, as well as individual humans, are somewhat helpless and aimless on their own, and in continuous need of guidance and prodding. What is more, humans seem never to outgrow this need, so that even imperial leaders and deities of cosmic proportions, ruling over vast realms, are portrayed as shepherds.

Were the Israelites to be left without a faithful shepherd they would not only be denied victory in battle, but would disintegrate as a people, and *ʿadat Yiśrāʾēl* "the community of Israel" would cease to exist. It is not accidental, therefore, that David, the epitome of Israelite kingship, is portrayed as having been a shepherd in his youth (1 Sam 16–17), or that Moses was one for a time (Exod 3).

COMMENT 2: INHERITANCE IN BIBLICAL ISRAEL AND THE MANASSITE CLAIM TO TERRITORY WEST OF THE JORDAN

Numbers 27:1–11, followed by Numbers 36, constitute brief codes of law on the subject of inheritance, whose specific provisions have already been summarized. It has been explained that the episode of Zelophehad's daughters plays out in two dimensions: There is, to be sure, the legal aspect, but the legalities, themselves, lead directly to the historiographic agenda of the priestly school in the Book of Numbers, and, beyond that, to the Book of Joshua. It would be best to engage the legalities first.

By way of background, the complaint entered by the daughters of Zelophehad alludes to what may have been a widespread practice in ancient Israel, and in the ancient Near East, generally. The implication is that if Zelophehad had belonged to Korah's faction, and had met his death on this account, his property would have been expropriated by duly constituted authority, and his heirs, whoever they were, would have been denied his inheritance. His daughters take pains to assert that this was not the case.

This theme recalls the practice known as *ḥērem*. Although a large part of what we know of this practice comes from the context of war and conquest, there are also more regular, legal aspects to the *ḥērem*. Individuals would be condemned to death under this law, such as one convicted of flagrant idolatry (Exod 22:19). In such an event, the property of the condemned would be appropriated by the state or by the temple. This process is nowhere explicitly ordained in biblical literature, but it may be inferred from any number of biblical sources. Thus, the law of Leviticus 27:19–21 makes reference to *śedēh haḥērem* "the proscribed field," which is to say, a field seized under the *ḥērem* law, as, for example, the field of one condemned to death for his crimes.

It is stated that one who fails to redeem the field he has devoted to the temple, involving a twenty percent surcharge, or who illegally sells it to another after its devotion, loses it permanently. At the Jubilee, that field will not revert to him as it would have had the owner simply defaulted on his pledge. It will rather become the permanent property of the temple, "like the proscribed field." One may infer from this provision that property expropriated under the *ḥērem* law became the permanent possession of the confiscating authority, and would be denied to the heirs of the condemned person. The well-known story of Naboth of Jezreel (1 Kings 21) further indicates that the land of one condemned to death for certain crimes would not be inherited by his heirs, but would be expropriated by the state (Sarna 1996). Naboth was falsely condemned to death for sedition and blasphemy. Perjured witnesses stated that he had cursed both God and King (1 Kings 21:10), restating the ancient prohibition of Exodus 22:27. It was this legality, though falsely imposed, which allowed Ahab to take possession of Naboth's vineyard in the name of the king. In 2 Kings 9:26, the guilt of Ahab is transferred to his son, Jehoram, whose executed body is symbolically cast upon the field of Naboth.

Finally, a late biblical source, Ezra 10:5–8, provides a further example of the power of the state to expropriate the property of criminals. The leaders of the exilic community foreswore all the members of the community to assemble in Jerusalem within three days on pain of having their possessions seized under the *ḥērem* law. In his study, Sarna collected interesting ancient Near Eastern and classical Greek and Roman parallels to the practice of expropriating the estates of the perpetrators of certain heinous crimes, especially those of a public character.

All of the above observations are merely suggestive, however. More explicitly, Numbers 27 and 36 draw attention to the subject of women's rights in biblical Israel and in the ancient Near East, and relate to their status in the family and clan. Z. Ben-Barak (1980) has delved into the question of women's rights over inheritance in ancient Near Eastern perspective, with special reference to the account of Zelophehad's daughters. She correctly explains the innovation of law introduced in Numbers 27 as intended to preserve land within the immediate family, and cities prebiblical as well as contemporary parallels that indicate that daughters were at times empowered as heirs. This practice may be inferred from a statement of Gudea of Lagash (Statute B, VII, 44–48), and from a Sumerian law fragment from Nippur where we find a clear statement to the effect that when there are no male heirs, a daughter might inherit from her father (Civil 1965:4 6). At times, adopted daughters were specifically declared to be heirs, and fictitious adoptions served to empower daughters in this way. This practice is attested at Nuzi, where fictitious adoptions were a major feature of family law. Ben-Barak cites a provision from the enactments of Solon of Athens, in the sixth century B.C.E., that closely parallels the combined effects of Numbers 27 and 36 (Harrison 1968). Unmarried daughters would inherit their father's estate when there were no direct male heirs, but only if they married within the family.

In a word, the empowerment of unmarried daughters as heirs was an exceptional practice in the ancient Near East and the Mediterranean world. It is uncertain to what extent such exemptions from the general rule of patrilineal inheritance permanently changed the status of women. In the more immediate context of biblical interpretation, the provisions of Numbers 27, when followed by those of Numbers 36, are puzzling. It is hard to accept that Torah legislators would not have anticipated the consequences of allowing daughters to inherit family land, initially. In a patrilineal system, property that women brought into marriage would be inherited by the sons produced by that marriage, and would be lost to the women's immediate family, her clan or her tribe, as the case may be, within a single generation. In the Notes to Numbers 27 it was explained that the dispensation to the daughters of Zelophehad reflected an individualistic mentality rather than a clannish or tribal set of concerns. The theme of a direct heir, a son to carry on the name, has a long history in ancient Near Eastern law and literature and is a salient feature of the Israelite ethos (Brichto 1973). The hero of Ugaritic epic, Dān'ēl of the Aqhat story, longs for a son to carry on his name after failing to sire one in any number of attempts, and this theme dominates the Abraham narratives. For all of its pathos and personal animus, the banishment of Hagar clearly expresses Sarah's concern that Hagar's son would share in Abraham's inheritance

(Gen 21:10), a concern earlier voiced by Abraham himself, during the covenant enactment (Gen 15:3). In royal covenants and succession accounts, we also note concern as to who would be the direct heir (2 Sam 7:11–13, 1 Kings 8:19). The continuity of the *bayit* "family, household" required a male heir to transmit the patrimony down through the generations, and the practical importance of patrilineal descent rested in the retention of family land. Within this system, the firstborn inherited a double share (Deut 21:15–17).

The law of the Levirate in Deuteronomy 25:5–10 was intended to preserve the "name" (Hebrew *šēm*) of a deceased husband over his ancestral land, one who, like Zelophehad, had died without leaving a son. Both sources, Deuteronomy 25:6 and Numbers 27:4, actually speak of preserving the "name" of the deceased, and invite close comparison with each other. In effect, whenever the Levirate law was implemented (and Deuteronomy clearly suggests that it was already on its way out), the one next in line to inherit the land of a man who had left no sons, namely, his brother, would marry his widow, assume ownership of the deceased's land, and would subsequently bequeath that land to the son born of the Levirate marriage, thereby preserving some sort of bloodline. Clearly, widows enjoyed no estate rights over family land.

In cases where the widow could no longer bear children, or where she predeceased her husband, Levirate marriage could not be actualized. This is what is to be inferred from Naomi's statement, in the story of Ruth, that the Levirate solution was unavailable to her since she was too old to bear a son (Ruth 1:11–12). Naomi had, indeed, borne sons, but these had died, so that she remained not only without a husband, but without heirs as well. What happened in the Ruth story, where various legal themes are cleverly manipulated, was that the widow of one of Naomi's sons, namely, Ruth, stood in for her and married a close clan relative. She bore a son who was then recognized as a surrogate for Naomi's own son (Ruth 4:17). In this way, the *bayit,* a prominent motif in the story of Ruth (Ruth 1:8–9, 4:11–12), was ultimately preserved.

We are to assume that Zelophehad had left no wife; as one of the Wilderness Generation, she had perished as he had. So, the Levirate law could not be invoked, and the next in line, Zelophehad's brother, or his brother's heirs, would have inherited this land, as stipulated in Numbers 27:9–11. But, isn't that what happened eventually, in any case? Once endogamy was imposed on the heiresses, as stipulated in Numbers 36, Zelophehad's daughters ended up marrying the sons of their deceased father's brothers (see the Notes to Num 36:11). In effect, cousin-marriage replaced Levirate marriage, merely moving the process forward by one generation. Whereas the Levirate law would have bound the widow to the brother of her deceased husband, the provisions of Numbers 36 bind the daughters of the deceased to the sons of their father's brothers.

The eventual outcome of this method of retaining ancestral land within the nuclear family calls attention to a related process, one associated with debt. Reference is to "redemption" (Hebrew *ge'ullah*), a process by which an owner could regain land lost to him due to debt. This is not a generational concern, in the first instance, but a side-effect of a system that allowed the pledging of ancestral land to debt. The right of redemption by the affected owner was traditional, even sacred, and effectively defined sale in less than final terms, disallowing the alienation of family land. What makes *ge'ullāh* relevant to Numbers 27 is the fact that in certain circumstances it befell clan relatives to do the redeeming when the owner himself was unable to do so. It has already been observed in Notes to Numbers 27:9–11 that the order of inheritance in cases where no daughter survived resembles the order of clan relatives who were duty-bound to restore family land that faced forfeiture to a non-Israelite creditor, according to Leviticus 25:47–49.

This duty is epitomized in the account of Jeremiah's act of redeeming the field of his uncle, Hanamel (Jer 32:6–14). In that case, however, ownership of the field was transferred to Jeremiah, the actual redeemer, whereas according to the provisions of Leviticus 25, the clan relative was required, in effect, to pay for restoring land to his relative that would henceforth belong to his relative, not to him. Undoubtedly, it was this prospect that caused the anonymous closer relative in the story of Ruth to change his mind once Boaz informed him that the field he would redeem would not be his, but would be inherited by the son born to him by Ruth. He would have to bear the expense of redemption, and yet would never see the benefits of his act accrue to his other sons. That would truly ruin his estate (Ruth 4:6). Logically, it is this concern that, together with other difficulties, created resistance to Levirate marriage, as a whole. The *levir* might have to expend his resources on back taxes and other costs required to make the land of his deceased brother productive once again. Then, too, Levirate marriage could only be imposed consistently in societies that practiced polygamy.

The system of redemption by a clan relative can be seen as an alternative to the Levirate, one probably more attractive precisely because it did not normally involve marriage, and allowed, at the very least, that the redeemer would gain title to the land that had cost him a good deal. When the institution of *ge'ūllāh* itself was altered so as to preserve the direct line of the deceased, as the Levirate had done, it became much less attractive. In other words, there were several ways that land could be lost to the nuclear family, to the clan, or to the tribe, and several ways to correct for this side-effect of the patrilineal system. The episode of the daughters of Zelophehad focuses on the concerns of the nuclear family, and on the pitfalls of exclusive reliance on direct male heirs. By allowing interim possession of Zelophehad's estate by his daughters, it was assured that the land in question did not immediately become the possession of his brothers, uncles or the like, at the time of his death, but retained its association with him through his daughters. Between the time of his death and their marriage it had become their property, and any sons born to them would, therefore, inherit it ultimately. It achieved the objectives of the Levirate along the lines of the *ge'ūllāh* system but as it was reconstructed by the priestly school.

Numbers 36 saw to it that endogamy further prevented loss of land to the clan or tribe, and it is at this point that the second dimension of interpretation comes into play; the historiographic agenda of the priestly school in Numbers. In the Comments to Numbers 26, which preserves a record of the second census, the relationship between the empowerment of Zelophehad's daughters and the anomalous territorial situation of the tribe of Manasseh was discussed at length. It has been suggested, in this connection, that the episode of Zelophehad's daughters had as its original thrust the legitimation of the Manassite settlement west of the Jordan (N. H. Snaith, 1966). Whereas the Machirite-Manassite settlement east of the Jordan in Gilead would be legitimated in Numbers 32:39–42 as part of the larger interest within Numbers, Deuteronomy and Joshua with the legitimacy of the Transjordanian tribes, Reuben and Gad, the status of those clans of Manasseh, including that of Zelophehad, west of the Jordan, in northern Israel, lacked similar substantiation. According to Joshua 17:3–6, the daughters of Zelophehad inherited their father's land within the Manassite territory, more specifically, within the territory of the sons of Hepher, Zelophehad's father, west of the Jordan. This is how Joshua 17:5–6, in particular, are to be understood: Some Manassites, among them the daughters of Zelophehad, son of Hepher, settled west of the Jordan, and the others, like the Machirite clan, east of the Jordan. This is the fulfillment of Numbers 32, of which sections are assigned to JE. Most of that chapter speaks only of Reuben and Gad, the two Transjordanian tribes, but Numbers 32:39–42 focus on the Machirite clan of Manasseh, who, we are told, settled in Gilead. The priestly tradition, speaking in Numbers 34:13–15, rounded out this clan by referring to it as "half of the tribe of Manasseh" (cf. Deut 3:13, Jos 13:7, 14:2–3, 22:13, 15, 1 Chron 5:18, 23, 12:37, 26:32). This subject will be explored at length in Notes and Comments to Numbers 32.

Whereas most of the relevant Torah sources, and Joshua, as well, are more concerned with the legitimacy of the Transjordanian Israelite community, Numbers 26–27 seem to be concerned with those clans of the tribe of Manasseh who settled west of the Jordan. As if to explain the absence of a clear statement, paralleling Numbers 32, which would declare the right of certain clans of Manasseh to settle west of the Jordan, a story circulated, whether true or fictive, that a major landowner of the tribe of Manasseh west of the Jordan, one named Zelophehad, son of Hepher, died without male heirs. As a consequence, his holdings could not be registered by his name. To put it another way, there had been questions about some of the holdings of Manasseh west of the Jordan. To establish these as Manassite, Zelophehad's daughters were given title to them after his death. The integrity of the Manassite territory west of the Jordan was thus established, at least temporarily, in the priestly historiography. According to that historiography, the Israelites entered Canaan west of the Jordan as a unified mass on one day, exactly forty years after they had left Egypt (Jos 4–5). When they crossed the Jordan, the territory of Manasseh west of the Jordan was granted intact, just as was its territory east of the Jordan, as we subsequently learn from Joshua 16–17. It was necessary to assure that the lands in question would remain part of the territory of Manasseh, and this explains the tribal mentality that informs Numbers 36. The unfolding of the historiographic agenda does not vitiate the significance of the legal dispensation granting daughters the status of heirs in the absence of sons. The double function of the Zelophehad episode remains: It is a legal etiology, but one that also possesses unusual historiographic significance.

PART VI.

NUMBERS 28–29: THE FESTIVAL CALENDAR OF THE PUBLIC CULT

◆

INTRODUCTION

Numbers 28–29 (more precisely Num 28:1–30:1) comprise a ritual code of practice outlining the schedule of sacrificial rites to be performed in the public cult of ancient Israel throughout the year. Like the liturgical calendar of Leviticus 23, Numbers 28–29 represent an important source of knowledge about public worship in biblical times. The varied contents of Numbers 28–29 form a complex document that shows discernible traces of redaction.

There is no overall indication in Numbers 28–29 as to where the public cult was to be conducted, and such facts are absent from Leviticus 23, as well. An incidental reference to the Sanctuary occurs in Numbers 28:7, where we read that the libation accompanying the daily burnt offering must be offered *baqqodeš* "in the Sanctuary." It is also obvious that sacred convocations termed *miqrā' qodeš* were celebrated publicly at the Sanctuary, where the people assembled (see Notes to Num 28:18). The characterization of the fifteenth day of the first month, the beginning of the *maṣṣôt* festival, as a *ḥag* "pilgrimage," and the assignment of the same status to the seven-day festival beginning on the fifteenth of the seventh month, also indicate that these occasions were to be celebrated at the Sanctuary, which was the destination of pilgrimages.

Within the literary framework of the Book of Numbers, the reader was undoubtedly expected to realize, without being told as much repeatedly, that the public cult was performed at the Tent of Meeting. Though designated by more than one name, this cult center is the unique Sanctuary of reference in the priestly traditions of the Torah, and its altar is considered the only legitimate one. This is emphasized in Leviticus 17, the prologue to the Holiness Code. In Leviticus 23, and in certain other priestly sources, we find references to the observance of various sacred occasions that do not involve sacrifice, *bekol môšĕbōtêkem* "in all your settlements," but there is no similar stipulation in Numbers 28–29.

Just as the site of public sacrifice is not usually made explicit in Numbers 28–29, so is there no precise time frame specified for such cultic activity, as a rule. Nevertheless, it can be inferred from the specifications of the daily *tāmîd*, stated in Numbers 28:4, that unless otherwise indicated, public sacrifices commenced in the morning. We read that the *tāmîd* was to be offered in two stages, one in the morning and the other at twilight. Surprisingly, Numbers 28:16–25, the section on the paschal sacrifice, fails to state that this offering was to be presented at a special time, late in the day. In Leviticus 23:5, the source that most probably serves as the basis for our verse, it is stipulated that the paschal sacrifice is to be offered *bên hā'arbayim* "at twilight," before sunset, so that it still occurs on the fourteenth day. In Numbers 28–29, public worship is structured as a daily performance, with additional offerings ordained for Sabbaths, New Moons, festivals and other holy days. These sacred occasions do not interrupt the continuity of the daily offering, known as the *tāmîd.* What is prescribed for Sabbaths, New Moons and the annual occasions is presented "in addition to—" (Hebrew *ʿal*), or "apart from" (Hebrew *milbad*) the burnt offering of the *tāmîd.* The resulting structure marks a significant shift in the direction of cultic legislation, for, with the exception of Exodus 29:38–46, whose special relation to Numbers 28–29 will be discussed presently, none of the other Torah codes prescribes the daily burnt offering as the mainstay of the public cult. This is true of the Book of the Covenant and the brief ritual code of Exodus 34, of the Deuteronomic laws, and of the liturgical calendar of Leviticus 23, also a priestly text. All of these major sources speak primarily of annual occasions, and, in fact, fail to prescribe special public offerings even for the Sabbath Day, or in most cases for the New Moons of the year. The new emphasis evident here recommends grouping the diverse events scheduled in Numbers 28–29 as follows:

1) Occasions on which public sacrifice has already been prescribed in other Torah legislation of a presumably earlier date. These include: (a) the Paschal sacrifice on the fourteenth day of the first month (Num 28:16); (b) the *ḥag* "pilgrimage festival" of the fifteenth day of the first month, when for seven days unleavened bread (*maṣṣôt*) must be eaten (Num 28:17–25); (c) the festival on which the first fruits (*bikkûrîm*) are offered, here also referred to as "the [festival of] your weeks" (*šābūʿōtêkem;* Num 28:26–31); (d) the New Moon of the seventh month, a day of blasting the horn (*terûʿāh*); (e) the tenth day of the seventh month, a day of self-denial (Num 29:7–11); (f) the seven-day *ḥag* in the autumn of the year, beginning on the fifteenth day of the seventh month and followed by the recessional (*ʿaṣeret*) of the eighth day (Num 29:12–39).
2) Occasions on which public sacrifice is not prescribed in any other Torah text: (a) The Sabbath Day. Observance of the Sabbath is ordained in other codes of law, but public sacrifices are nowhere prescribed for the Sabbath in any other Torah source (Num 28:9–10); (b) The New Moons of the year (with the exception of the New Moon of the seventh month, in Num 28:11–15, below). Although the New Moon is a known, ancient institution in biblical Israel, and though certain sacred occasions may fall on a New Moon, there is no other statement in the Torah requiring public sacrifice on the New Moon (Num 28:11–16); (c) The two-phased daily *tāmîd.* As has been explained, none of the *major* Torah texts pertaining to the public cult prescribes a daily burnt offering, except Exodus 29:38–42, and it will be argued that the prescription of the two-phased *tāmîd* in Exodus 29 may, in fact, be a reflex of Numbers 28–29, and not a genuine textual precedent. (It should be noted that Lev

6:12–16 ordains a regular two-phased grain offering, to be disposed of as a holocaust). On basis of the above, the contents of Numbers 28–29 may be divided into two principal sequences:

1) Numbers 28:1–15: New legislation governing daily worship, and the sacrificial celebration of the Sabbath and New Moon. None of these occasions is designated *miqrāʾ qōdeš* "a sacred convocation." Specific legislation is preceded by a superscription (Num 28:1–2) admonishing the Israelites to perform God's ordained offerings by fire at their appointed times. What is surprising is the failure of the law on the Sabbath (Num 28:9–10) to restate the basic principle governing the Sabbath Day, namely, that assigned tasks are forbidden. Whereas it is understandable that a sacred convocation might not be convened on every Sabbath in the year, it is absurd to assume that any Torah code would permit assigned tasks on the Sabbath, even by implication. We should conclude, therefore, that Numbers 28:1–15 were composed with a different agenda in mind, one concerned solely with sacrifices that were to be performed in the Sanctuary. Because this section contrasts with the rest of Numbers 28–29, that build on existing Torah legislation, it is understandable that it refers in a limited way to aspects of performance and celebration realized outside the Sanctuary, and in addition to sacrifices.
2) Numbers 28:16–29:38: Annual occasions, all known from other Torah legislation, and all designated sacred convocations when assigned labor is prohibited. Within this division, Numbers 28:16–31 cover the spring of the year, and Numbers 29:1–38 the autumn of the year. The overall code concludes with a postscript stating that what has been prescribed here is in addition to all of the private offerings, such as vows and voluntary presentations, that Israelites customarily bring to the Sanctuary (Num 29:30–30:1). To be discussed in the Comments is the larger question of where Numbers 28–29 stand in the development of Torah legislation, and further, the implications of Numbers 28–29 for reconstructing the history of biblical religion.

NUMBERS 28: TRANSLATION

28 [1]YHWH spoke to Moses as follows:

[2]Issue a command to the Israelite people, and say to them: You must take care to present to me my offering, my food, for my aromatic offerings by fire, at its set time.

[3]Say to them: This is the offering by fire that you shall present to YHWH: Yearling lambs without blemish, two each day, as a regular burnt offering.

[4]Perform the one lamb in the morning and the second lamb you shall perform at twilight.

[5]And for a grain offering: one-tenth of an *ephah* of semolina flour, mixed with one-fourth of a *hin* of beaten oil.

[6][This is] the regular burnt offering, the one that was instituted at Mount Sinai, to produce a pleasing aroma; it is an offering by fire to YHWH.

[7]And its libation: one-fourth of a *hin* for each lamb, to be poured out in the Sanctuary as a libation of intoxicating drink to YHWH.

[8]You shall perform the second lamb at twilight. You shall perform [it] with the same grain offering as in the morning, and with the same libation. It is an offering by fire of pleasing aroma to YHWH.

[9]And on the Sabbath Day: two yearling lambs without blemish, and two-tenths of an *ephah* of semolina flour as a grain offering, mixed with oil, together with its libation.

[10]This is to be the burnt offering on every successive Sabbath, in addition to the burnt offering of the regular ritual and its libation.

[11]But on your New Moons you shall present a burnt offering to YHWH. Bulls from the herd—two, and one ram; yearling lambs—seven, without blemish.

[12]And three-tenths of an *ephah* of semolina flour, as a grain offering mixed with oil for each bull, and two-tenths of an *ephah* of semolina flour as a grain offering mixed with oil for the one ram.

[13]And one-tenth of an *ephah* each, of semolina flour as a grain offering mixed with oil for every lamb. It is a burnt offering of pleasing aroma, an offering by fire to YHWH.

[14]And their libations: There shall be one-half of a *hin* for each bull and one-third *hin* for the ram, and one-fourth of a *hin* for each lamb—of wine. This is to be the burnt offering for each successive New Moon, for the months of the year.

[15]And one he-goat shall be performed as a sin-offering to YHWH, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its libation.

[16]In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, a paschal sacrifice to YHWH.

[17]And on the fifteenth day of the same month a pilgrimage festival; for seven days unleavened bread shall be eaten.

[18]On the first day [there is to be] a sanctuary convocation; you may not perform any manner of assigned labor.

[19]You shall present an offering by fire to YHWH: bulls of the herd—two; one ram, and seven yearling lambs, without blemish you shall provide.

[20]And their libation: three-tenths [of an *ephah*] for the ram you shall perform.

[21]You shall perform one-tenth [of an *ephah*] for each lamb, for all seven lambs.

[22]And one he-goat for a sin offering, for performing expiation rites over you.

[23]Apart from the burnt offering of the morning, that is part of the regular burnt offering, you shall perform these.

[24]You shall perform the very same [rites] each day for seven days as a gift of food, an offering by fire to produce a pleasing aroma for YWWH. This [rite] shall be performed along with its libation, in addition to the regular burnt offering.

[25]And on the seventh day—a sanctuary convocation; you may not perform any manner of assigned labor.

[26]And on the day of the offering of first fruits, when you present a grain offering of the new crop to YHWH, on your festival of weeks, you shall hold a sanctuary convocation. You may not perform any manner of assigned labor.

[27]You shall present a burnt offering to produce a pleasing aroma for YHWH: bulls of the herd—two; one ram; seven yearling lambs.

[28]And their grain offerings: semolina flour mixed with oil; three-tenths [of an *ephah*] for each bull, two-tenths [of an *ephah*] for the ram.

[29]One-tenth [of an *ephah*] apiece for each lamb, for the seven lambs.

[30]One he-goat [for the sin-offering], for performing expiation rites over you.

[31]Apart from the burnt offering of the regular ritual and its grain offering you shall perform [these]; they shall consist for you of unblemished animals, and [shall be accompanied by] their libations.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 28:1–15: THE DAILY *TĀMÎD* AND PUBLIC RITES FOR SABBATHS AND NEW MOONS

1. The superscription (Num 28:1–2) admonishes the Israelites to offer to YHWH his prescribed sacrifices at their designated times. The emphasis on a proper *môʿēd* "set, appointed time" pervades the cultic calendar of Numbers 28–29.

2. *Issue a command to the Israelite people.* Similar formulas are found in Leviticus 24:2, Numbers 5:2, and further on in Numbers 34:2, 35:2. The initial command is consistently followed by an imperative form of the verb, or a modal clause, as is the case here: *weʾāmartā ʾalêhem* "and say to them." The formulation of Numbers 28:2 is distinctive, however, in projecting a series of appositives, literally rendered: "my offering, my food, for my offerings by fire,

my pleasing aroma." It should be noted that emphatic formulations with the verb *šāmar* + infinitive construct are frequent in legal and ritual texts. Thus, *tišmerû lehaqrîb* "take care to offer" recalls *tišmerû[n] la'aśôt* "take care to perform" in Deuteronomy 12:1, 13:1, 24:8. The Hebrew formula *bemô'adô* "at its set time" was explained in Notes to Numbers 9:2; (Levine 1993:295–296), where reference is to the paschal sacrifice. The efficacy of sacrificial rites depended on their performance at set times.

Beginning in Numbers 28:2–8, and continuing throughout Numbers 28–29, certain technical terms for types of sacrifices, and operative verbs that describe sacrificial rites recur on a regular basis. It would be helpful to explain these components in the passage where they first occur, clearing the way for a less encumbered interpretation of the entire ritual code. In cases where such components have been explained earlier on in the Commentary on Numbers, the reader will be referred to chapter and verse. The first term to appear is the composite *qorbānî laḥmî* "my offering of my food." It is unique in Scripture, although, for itself, *leḥem* "bread, food" as a generic term may characterize sacrificial offerings. It is so employed in priestly legislation, especially in the Holiness Code, where we repeatedly encounter *leḥem 'elōhîm* "God's food" (Lev 21:6, passim; 22:25). The generic term *qorbān* "offering" was explained in Notes to Numbers 5:15; (Levine 1993:194). The operative verb *hiqrîb* "to offer, present," deriving from the same root, regularly conveys the commandment to sacrifice in Numbers 28:11, 19, 27, 29:8, 13, 37, and see Notes to Numbers 8:9–10; (Levine 1993:275–276).

The second term is Hebrew *'iššeh* "offering by fire." Problems related to its meaning were discussed in Notes to Numbers 15:3; (Levine 1993:389). Here, the declined plural form *le'iššay* "for my offerings by fire" refers to the entire regimen of burnt offerings sacrificed in the public cult throughout the year. In Numbers 28:3, 8, below, and recurrently in Numbers 28–29, the collective *'iššeh* refers to various sacrificial offerings, or to parts of them; specifically, to whatever is actually consumed in the altar fire. Finally, the Hebrew *rēaḥ nîḥōaḥ* "pleasing aroma" is a frequent characterization in priestly law, and was explained in Notes to Numbers 15:3; (Levine 1993:390).

The Two-Phased *Tāmîd* (Num 28:3–8)

The formulation of Numbers 28:3–8 may be compared with Exodus 29:38–46. The literary relationship between these two statements will be explored in the Comments. Beginning here, and continuing consistently throughout the prescription of sacrificial rites in Numbers 28–29, the "burnt offering," Hebrew *'ōlāh*, is regarded as the principal sacrifice. It is accompanied by a "grain offering" (*minḥāh*) and a libation (*nesek*) of wine. On New Moons and on annual occasions a sin-offering (*ḥaṭṭā't*), consisting of a he-goat, is also required. A fixed regimen of composite rites is thus projected. The daily *tāmîd* complex consisted of two symmetrical phases, initiated in the morning and repeated at twilight. Each phase consisted of an unblemished yearling lamb offered as an *ʿōlāh*, accompanied by a grain offering of semolina flour and a libation of wine.

3. *This is the offering by fire that you shall present to* YHWH. The Hebrew formulation, *zeh hāʾiššeh ʾasěr taqrîbû le-YHWH* serves as the caption for all of Numbers 28–29. It complements the recurring general formula of Leviticus 23: *wehiqrabtem ʾiššeh le-YHWH* "You shall present an offering by fire to YHWH" (Lev 23:8, 25, 27, 36–37). Leviticus 23 makes general statements to which Numbers 28–29 adds specification, as if to say: "This is the offering by fire," the very one ordained as a category in Leviticus 23. Sacrificial animals are to be without blemish, a condition characterized as *tāmîm* "perfect, complete" (Num 6:14). The physical imperfections that disqualify a sacrificial animal are enumerated in Leviticus 22:17–25 (Levine 1989b:150–152), and the basic requirement of completeness is stated in Deuteronomy 17:1: "You shall not sacrifice to YHWH, your God, an ox or a sheep that has any defect of a serious kind." Most of the enumerated blemishes are what we would call congenital, though permanent injuries also figured in the disqualification of sacrificial animals.

The composite term *ʿōlāh tāmîd*, variously *ʿōlat (hat) tāmîd*, as in Numbers 28:6, below, requires explanation. The first component, Hebrew *ʿōlāh* (Num 6:11, 7:15, passim, 8:12, 15:5, 24), derives from the verb *ʿ-l-h* "to ascend." According to the provisions of Leviticus 1, where the disposition of the *ʿōlāh* is prescribed, the entire animal (or bird), minus its hide, was to be consumed by the altar fire. This suggests that the term *ʿōlāh* expresses the heavenward ascent of the altar fire. Thus Judges 13:20: "As the flames rose up (*baʿalôt*) from the altar toward the sky." Alternatively, the term *ʿōlāh* may refer to the "ascent" onto the altar of the sacrifice itself, since the mode of offering this and other sacrifices is often expressed as *heʿelāh ʿōlāh* "to raise up a burnt offering" (Gen 8:20, Deut 12:3). Then, too, reference may be to the fact that an officiant would mount a raised platform, tower or city wall in order to offer the sacrifice (Exod 20:23, 1 Sam 9:25). Scholars have noted that Keret, hero of the Ugaritic epic once mounted (the verb *ʿly*) the wall tower of his city for the purpose of offering sacrifices before battle (KTU_2, 38; 1.14: III, line 55—rev IV, line 8; and see Levine 1974:6, and note 5; Levine 1989b:5–6; 201, note 11). In perspective, the first of the three possibilities appears most likely: The *ʿōlāh* is so-called because its fire ascends to God in heaven, and is inhaled by the deity. The phenomenological implications of this interpretation will be explored in the Comments to Numbers 28–29.

The term *tāmîd* designates a variety of sacrificial rites that are regular, most often but not always of daily occurrence, as is the case with the present burnt offering. The etymology of Hebrew *tāmîd* remains uncertain. It has been suggested that it derives from a root *m-w-d,* a variant realization of *m-d-d* "to measure," on the analogy of Late Hebrew *tādîr* "regular, chronic," from the root *d-w-r* (or *d-y-r*) "to revolve, encircle" (*HALAT*:1609–1610, s.v. *tāmîd;* Levy 1963:IV, 627–628, s.v. *tādîr;* Levine 1974:6, note 7). Adverbial or adjectival *tādîr* would mean, literally "that which comes around, rotates." Analogously, adjectival *tāmîd* would mean, literally "at measured intervals." The point is that *tāmîd* can be said of rites that are performed regularly, even if not uninterruptedly. Thus, in Leviticus 24:2–3 we read about the use of pure oil *leha'alōt nēr tāmîd* "for kindling the regular lamp; the lamp that was to burn regularly." In actual practice, this lamp burned only "from evening to morning," not incessantly.

This interpretation differs from the notion of "everlasting, eternal" sometimes associated with Hebrew *tāmîd.* That this lamp was to be kindled throughout the generations is a requirement there expressed by the formula: "It is a law for all time throughout the ages" (*ḥuqqat 'ôlām ledōrōtēkem*), not by the term *tāmîd* itself.

Scanning biblical usage, we find such terms as *minhah tāmîd* "a regular grain offering" (Lev 6:13), and *qeṭōret tāmîd* "a regular incense offering" (Exod 30:8). Like the regular burnt offering, these were performed daily. The "bread of display" (*leḥem [hap]pānîm*) is also referred to as *leḥem hattāmîd* "the regularly offered bread" in Numbers 4:7, an identification also implied in Exodus 25:30. In Leviticus 24:5–9, the preparation and arrangement of this bread are prescribed, and it is stipulated that it was to be set on tables in the Sanctuary every Sabbath, so that, in that context, *tāmîd* indicates a weekly interval. The designation *'anšê tāmîd* in Ezekiel 39:14 is probably to be rendered "regularly assigned personnel." In certain instances, usage of *tāmîd* would seem to convey perpetuity or continuity, as in Leviticus 6:6 *'ēš tāmîd tûkad 'al hammizbēaḥ lō' tikbeh* "A perpetual fire shall be left burning on the altar, not to go out."

It becomes necessary, therefore, to determine in each instance the precise meaning of the designation *tāmîd,* as well as its syntactic function as substantive, adjective or adverb. For itself, *tāmîd* is one in a series of biblical technical terms whose origin can be traced to administrative contexts, showing that the vocabulary of the cult was part of the scribal lexicon of government agencies. Thus, in 2 Kings 25:30 we are told how the Babylonian ruler, Evil-Merodach, showed kindness to Jehoiachin, the captive Judean king: "And his allotment of food, a regular allotment of food (*wa' arūḥātô, 'arūḥat tāmîd*), was given him by the king; each day's specifications in due course, all the days of his life." Comparative evidence, to be discussed in the Comments to Numbers 28–29, reinforces the administrative matrix of cultic terminology, as it clarifies the operative structure of ancient Near Eastern temple cults.

4. *Perform the one lamb in the morning.* Whereas in the previous verse, the

operative verb was *hiqrîb* "to offer, present," in the present verse, and occasionally in Numbers 28–29, the actual performance of a rite is expressed by the verb *ʿ-ś-h*, that bears this specialized connotation (see Notes to Num 15:3; Levine 1993:389). The construction *ʾet hakkebes ʾeḥād* "the one lamb" is unusual, it being normal that an adjective agree with the noun it modifies in respect of determination, which would have produced *ʾet hakkebes hāʾeḥād*. Either the Masoretic text reflects a scribal error, or this is one of the fairly rare examples in biblical Hebrew of attribution without the definite article. Cf. Genesis 19:33: *ballaylāh hûʾ* "in that night" (Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley 1960:1060, s.v. #126, y). In Moabite there is attribution without the definite article, as in *hbmt zʾt* "this cult-platform" (Mesha Stele, line 3; Gibson 1971:74). The lack of agreement is also typical of Phoenician-Punic syntax, where we find what Friedrich calls the *hdbr zh* typology (Friedrich 1970:#300, 1). The Hebrew *bên hāʿarbayim* "twilight" is explained in Notes to Numbers 9:3; (Levine 1993:296), where it delimits the time frame for the performance of the paschal sacrifice.

5. *And for a grain offering.* Two offerings regularly accompanied the *ʿōlāh* in the composite rites of the public cult: a grain offering (*minḥāh*) and a libation of wine (*nesek*). The recipe for the usual varieties of grain offerings is prescribed in Leviticus 2 (Levine 1989b:9–14), and the term *minḥāh*, itself, is explained in Notes to Numbers 15:4; (Levine 1993:390). Numbers 15:1–16 is a code of practice specifying the accompanying grain offerings and libations, and in Notes to Numbers 15:1–16 (Levine 1993:388–393), a delineation of the requirements for these offerings is provided, including a valuation of the units of measurement for liquids and dry substances, the *hin* and the *ephah*, respectively. This information will not be repeated here. The grain offering of each phase of the *tāmîd* consists of one-tenth of an *ephah* of semolina flour, with one-fourth of a *hin* of beaten olive oil; quantities vary in other instances.

6. *the one that was instituted at Mount Sinai.* The unusual formulation of the Hebrew, *hāʾásūyāh behar Sînay*, employs the somewhat rare passive participial form of the verb *ʿ-ś-h*. This verb normally means "to do, make, perform" (Exod 38:24). And yet, there is no record in the Torah of this specific rite having been performed while the Israelites were encamped at Mount Sinai. As a consequence, the sense of this parenthetical reference, or gloss, has been debated since late antiquity. Thus, Onkelos translates: *deʾitʿabîdāʾ betûrāʾ desînay* "that was performed on Mount Sinai," whereas the Septuagint has: *ʿê genoméne ʾen tô ʾórei Sina* "which came into being on Mount Sinai," a rendering that avoids the implication that this rite was actually performed at Mount Sinai. Although there is no specific reference to performing the *támîd* at Mount Sinai, Exodus 24:5 states that burnt offerings (*ʿōlōt*) and sacred gifts of greeting (*šelāmîm*) were, indeed, offered at Mount Sinai as part of the covenant enactment. The present statement may represent an instance of inner-

biblical exegesis, by which the burnt offerings of Exodus 24:5 were interpreted by priestly writers to have been, in effect, the two burnt offerings of the daily *tāmîd.* This resolution is suggested by Rashi in his comment on the present verse, where he refers to Exodus 24:5. The translation "that was instituted at Mount Sinai" understands the present statement to refer to Exodus 29:38–42, where the two-phased *tāmîd* is prescribed in much the same terms as it is here. That text is part of an extended priestly section of Exodus, chapters 25–31, that is immediately preceded, in the concluding verses of Exodus 24, by the report that Moses ascended Mount Sinai. There, according to priestly tradition, he was instructed in all that related to the Tabernacle project, including its design, priesthood and cult.

The problem with this translation is that the verb *ʿ-ś-h* most often connotes performance, and this is particularly true in priestly legislation, including in Numbers 28–29, as notes just above, in Numbers 28:4 (cf. Exod 12:48, Lev 14:19, Num 9:10, 14). Nevertheless, the verb *ʿ-ś-h* may convey the sense of ordering, or appointing. This connotation represents an extension of the factitive sense of acting effectively; of causing things to be done, or to happen. Thus, 1 Samuel 12:6 is best rendered: "YHWH who appointed Moses and Aaron" (*ʾăšer ʿāśāh ʾet Mōšeh weʾet ʾAharôn*; thus *NJPS*). A similar connotation may be conveyed in the distinctive diction of Ecclesiastes 3:14: *wehāʾelōhîm ʿāśāh šeyirʾû millepnānāw* "And God has made it so that they revere him," which is to say that he will be revered by them. A related sense is suggested by Isaiah 48:3:

Long ago, I foretold things that happened,
From my mouth they issued, and I announced them;
Suddenly I caused them to come about (*ʿaśîtî watābōʾnāh*).

We are left, therefore, with two possible translations, both of which are problematic, to a degree, and each of which has significantly different implications for understanding the priestly record on the question of when the two-phased *tāmîd* was introduced as part of the Israelite cult.

7. *And its libation.* The entry *weniskô* "and its libation" probably has its antecedent *hakkebes* "the lamb" of Numbers 28:4, above. This syntactic link clarifies the structure of composite rites, for the libation is associated with the lamb of the burnt offering even more closely than is the grain offering. This interpretation is reinforced in Numbers 28:8, below, and regularly throughout Numbers 28–29.

to be poured out in the Sanctuary as a libation of intoxicating drink to YHWH.

The accompanying libation consists of one-fourth *hin* of wine. In Notes to Numbers 6:3 (Levine 1993:217) in the Code of the Nazirite, it was explained that Hebrew *šĕkār*, when used to describe the contents of a libation, does not mean "beer," specifically, but is rather a generic term for intoxicants of various sorts. Accordingly, it is translated "intoxicating drink," implicitly a kind of wine, such as grappa. The Hebrew term *qōdĕs* often means "sanctuary, sacred place" (Levine 1987b, and see Notes to verse 18, below). Such is particularly true of the determinate form *haqqōdeš* "the Sanctuary, the temple," represented here in the prepositional form *baqqōdeš* "in the Sanctuary." The syntax is strange, since we would have expected the locative *baqqōdeš* to come at the end of the clause.

8. *You shall perform the second lamb.* This verse stipulates that the performance at twilight is to be an exact replication of the rites performed in the morning, thereby avoiding the necessity of repeating all of its specifications. A parallel two-phased structure is prescribed for the priestly grain offering in Leviticus 6:12–16. Beginning on the day when Aaron and his sons were installed as the true Israelite priests and continuing thereafter on a daily basis, a grain offering, designated *tāmîd*, was to be offered by the High Priest: *maḥaṣîtāh babbōqer ûmaḥaṣîtāh bāʿāreb* "one-half of it in the morning, and one-half of it in the evening." Like the *ʿōlāh*, that might consist of large and small cattle or birds, the grain offering of Leviticus 6:12–16 was a holocaust: *ʿōlāh le-YHWH kālîl toqṭār* "a burnt offering to YHWH, to be burned entirely." The formulation of Leviticus 6:12–16 conceives of a procedure whereby a cultic requirement is split, or part of it deferred. In other words, the daily requirement was an offering of ten *ephahs* of semolina flour prepared in a certain manner. Five would be offered in the morning and five in the evening. Similarly, the daily requirement for the *ʿōlāh* consisted of two yearling lambs; one would be offered in the morning and the other at twilight.

The present code of ritual law, in the form that we have it, has been adapted from a temple record that was originally registered in a tabular or two-dimensional format. This same format underlies the lists of Numbers 7, the record of the dedication of the wilderness Tabernacle (Levine 1993:248–253, 259–266). One of the clues pointing to a temple record as the original form of Numbers 28–29 is the occasional method of registering items and quantities, by which the item is first listed and then its quantity specified. An example is the specification *šenayim layyôm* "two each day" in the present verse. In record form, this entry might have been registered as follows:

Item: Yearling lambs, without blemish. **Number:** two each day.

The force of the Hebrew *layyôm* is adverbial: "daily, each day." Cf. *nāśîʾ ʾeḥād layyôm* "one chieftain a day" in Numbers 7:11, and in Numbers 28:24, below: *kāʾēleh taʿaśû layyôm šibʿat yāmîm* "You shall perform the very same [rites] each day, for seven days."

The Public Rites for the Sabbath Day (Num 28:9–10)

On the morning of the Sabbath, after the regular *tāmîd* had been offered on the altar, two yearling lambs without blemish were placed there as well. This burnt offering was accompanied by a grain offering and a libation. It is noteworthy that nothing is said here about the character of the Sabbath as a day of rest.

9. *And on the Sabbath Day.* This is the only legislation in the Torah that specifies burnt offerings for the Sabbath Day. Use of a pair of yearling lambs in the Israelite cult was fairly frequent, as was use of groups of seven lambs. As in the case of the *tāmîd*, each lamb offered was accompanied by a minhah consisting of one-tenth of an *ephah* of semolina flour "and its libation," namely, the libation accompanying each lamb, that consisted of one-fourth of a *hin* of oil.

10. The Hebrew formula *ʿōlat šabbāt bešabbattô* "the burnt offering on every successive Sabbath," (literally "the burnt offering of the Sabbath on its Sabbath") parallels *ʿōlat ḥōdeš beḥodšô* "the burnt offering for every successive New Moon" in Numbers 28:14, below. In the Introduction to Numbers 28–29, it was noted that the function of prepositional *ʿal* "in addition to" is crucial for understanding the structure of the public cult in biblical Israel. The schedule of the *tāmîd* was uninterrupted, like the days of the year and of the month. What was sacrificed on Sabbaths and other occasions supplemented the *tāmîd.* Here the antecedent of Hebrew *weniskāh* "and its libation" (feminine) is the term *ʿōlāh* itself. It is understood that the special sacrifice for the Sabbath Day would be placed on the altar in the morning, after the *tāmîd* had been offered, and the same would hold for all special occasions throughout the year. The only exception is the Paschal sacrifice which was offered at twilight (see Notes to Num 28:16, below).

The Public Rites for the New Moon (Num 28:11–15)

The rites for the New Moon were considerably more elaborate than the *tāmîd* or the Sabbath offering. They consisted of a pair of bulls, in addition to a ram and seven lambs. This upgrading had the effect of increasing proportionately the volume of the accompanying grain offerings and libations. The pattern of two bulls, one ram and seven lambs held for the two spring festivals, the *maṣṣôt* festival and the festival of weeks, but changed in the autumn of the year, for the celebrations that are scheduled in Numbers 29. Furthermore, a sin-offering (*ḥaṭṭāʾt*) is prescribed for the rites of the New Moon, and consistently for all subsequent occasions scheduled in the liturgical calendar.

11. *on your New Moons.* The New Moon may be designated in several ways. Here, we have the construction *berāʾšê ḥodšêkem* "on your New Moons,"

embodying the composite term *rōʾs ḥodeš,* literally "head of the month." It occurs elsewhere only in Numbers 10:10. It is likely that in Numbers 28:14, below, Hebrew *ḥodeš,* by itself, means "New Moon," rather than "month." This accords with well attested biblical Hebrew usage (cf. 1 Sam 20:5, 18, passim, 2 Kings 4:23, Isa 1:13–14, Amos 8:15). As a matter of fact, it is priestly usage, as well, as in Numbers 29:6, where *ʿōlat haḥodeš* means "the burnt offering of the New Moon." In Exodus 40:2, Ezekiel 46:1, we find another designation predicated on the equation: *ḥodeš* = New Moon, namely, *yôm haḥl ōdeš* "the day of the New Moon," that has cognates in Akkadian *ūmi arḫi* (Sumerian u.$_4$. sar), and in Ugaritic *ym ḥdṯ*. In chronological records, one also finds the designation of the New Moon as *beʾeḥād laḥōdeš* "on the first of the month" (Exod 40:2, Lev 23:24, Deut 1:3). In a society where lunar calendars predominated, the New Moon was an important occasion, whose history and changing character will be explored in the Comments.

In these verses we find adjustments of the grain offerings and libations commensurate with the increase in the numbers of animal offerings, and in the classes of animals prescribed. Hebrew *par* usually designates a young bull, perhaps a three-year-old one. This is suggested by the classification *par ben bāqār* "a bull born of the herd" (Exod 29:1), since Hebrew *ben* in the classification of animals and birds usually connotes the young of the species. Thus, *benê yônah* in Leviticus 1:14 means "young pigeons" (Levine 1989b:8). We lack precise information regarding the age of animals designated by terms such as *ʾayil* "ram." From Genesis 15:9 we learn that *ʾayil* can designate a three-year-old ram, but it is not certain that it always does so. In no case, however, is an *ʾayil* further specified as *ben šānāh* (or *ben šenātô*) "yearling." In the cultic classification system, large cattle rank higher than small cattle, as we would expect, and a ram ranks higher than a lamb. The result is that each bull warrants three-tenths of an *ephah* of semolina flour for the grain offering, and each ram two-tenths of an *ephah,* whereas each lamb receives only one-tenth of an *ephah.* Similarly, the libations are gradated according to the class of the animal, with each bull receiving one-half of a *hin* of wine, each ram one-third of a *hin,* and each lamb one-fourth of a *hin.*

In Numbers 28:14, there is an ambiguity, already noted above. Does the formula *ʿōlat ḥodeš beḥodšô leḥodšê haššānāh* mean "the burnt offering of each successive New Moon for the New Moons of the Year?" Or, does it mean "the burnt offering of each successive month, for the months of the year?" We have opted for the former. It might be relevant to cite, in support of this interpretation, the statement in Isaiah 66:23: *wehāyāh middê ḥōdeš beḥodšô umiddê šabbāt bešabbatô* "And it shall be that New Moon after New Moon, and Sabbath after Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship me."

15. *as a sin-offering.* The Hebrew term *ḥaṭṭāʾt* is based on the Piel stem of the verbal root *ḥ-ṭ-ʾ*, namely, *ḥiṭṭēʾ*, meaning "to remove the offense," hence:

"to purify" (Lev 14:49, 52, 8:15). Effectively, the privative Piel undoes the action described by the Qal stem; in this case, that of *ḥāṭā'* "to commit an offense." Biblical Hebrew usage, reflecting ancient Near Eastern perceptions of the sacred and of its violation, expresses sinfulness and impurity as two aspects of the same condition. In the priestly view, impurity is the effect produced by sinfulness of all sorts (Levine 1989b:20, to Lev 4:3). Following Milgrom, one could legitimately translate *ḥaṭṭā't* "purification offering," or the like, but to do so would be to give primacy to effect over cause (Milgrom 1991:252–258). The primary priestly legislation governing the *ḥaṭṭā't* sacrifice is found in Leviticus 4–5, in codes of ritual law that prescribe two basic types:

(1) An expiatory sacrificial rite that may be classified as the priestly *ḥaṭṭā't*, and that was aimed at safeguarding the Sanctuary from defilement. Such defilement would result from major though inadvertent offenses committed by the High Priest or collectively by the community. If the effects of such major offenses were not expiated, YHWH's Sanctuary and the Israelite encampment in which it was situated would be defiled. This type of *ḥaṭṭā't* required sacrificing a young bull, some of whose blood was brought inside the Shrine of the Sanctuary, and applied to parts of the inner Sanctuary in an unusual procedure. No section of the sacrificial animal was to be consumed by the priests, and those parts not placed on the altar of burnt offerings were to be burned to ashes outside the encampment in a rite of riddance (Lev 4:3–21, and see Notes to Num 15:24; Levine 1993:396). (2) The type of *ḥaṭṭā't* sacrifice required as expiation in cases when an individual Israelite or a tribal chief committed an inadvertent offense (Lev 44:22–35), or had omitted to fulfill an obligation (Lev 5:1–13). This sacrifice normally consisted of a he-goat, in Hebrew *sa'ir*, a term designating a goat at a certain age or stage of development, perhaps one whose hair (Hebrew *śē'ār*) had thickened. God was efficaciously propitiated through this act of sacrifice, and it also served to reward the Israelite priesthood for their services in securing expiation for Israelites. Accordingly, parts of the sacrifice were cooked and served as food to the priests in sacred precincts (Lev 6:17–23). This type of *ḥaṭṭā't* was quite ancient, and is referred to by Hosea (4:8) in his denunciation of the northern Israelite priesthood of his day: "They consume the *ḥaṭṭā't* sacrifice of my people, and yet crave their [very] transgressions."

Several varieties of this type of *ḥaṭṭā't* were in use, and, in turn, it served a number of functions. In the complex Yom Kippur ritual prescribed in Leviticus 16, a he-goat was offered as a *ḥaṭṭā't* offering to God on behalf of the people. This was part of the process of purifying the Sanctuary annually, on the tenth day of the seventh month, just prior to the autumn pilgrimage festival (Lev 16:9, 15, 29–34). In Leviticus 9:15, this type of *ḥaṭṭā't*, consisting of a he-goat, is termed *qorban hā'ām* "the offering of the people" (Levine 1974:101–108; 1989b:18–19). This is the *ḥaṭṭā't* prescribed in Numbers 28–29, to be offered on New Moons and annual occasions. It served as a periodic method of maintaining the purity of the Sanctuary, which would predictably suffer defilement from the daily traffic of priests and Israelites. This *ḥaṭṭā't* sacrifice could not expiate the grave offenses of the High Priest or of the community, as a whole, or, for that matter, restore the purity of the Sanctuary after corpse contamination, the subject of Numbers 19. Such offenses would call forth the priestly *ḥaṭṭā't* or some similar rite. The *ḥaṭṭā't* of the people would, however, be adequate for rectifying the usual kinds of impurity to which sanctuaries were vulnerable. The widespread utilization of he-goats for sin-offerings and their appropriateness for this rite will be discussed in the Comments.

Although listed last, the sin-offering undoubtedly preceded the other sacrifices of the New Moon, and even the *tāmîd,* the first sacrifice to be placed on the altar in the morning. Its purpose was, after all, to prepare the Sanctuary by securing expiation for inadvertent offenses and omissions, thereby restoring the Sanctuary's purity as a consequence. It was Anson Rainey (1970) who first clarified the difference between the order in which sacrifices are listed in temple records, and their actual position in the performance of the ritual.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 28:16–31: PUBLIC RITES FOR ANNUAL OCCASIONS

Public Rites for the First Month (Num 28:16–25)

Two related occasions were celebrated during the first month, in the spring of the year. On the fourteenth day of the first month, the paschal sacrifice was to be offered. On the fifteenth day, a *ḥag* "pilgrimage" is to take place, beginning a seven-day festival during which *maṣṣôt* rather than leavened bread were to be eaten. The first and seventh days are declared *miqrā' qōdeš* "a sanctuary convocation," when assigned labor is forbidden. Each day, for seven days, a fixed regimen of sacrificial offerings is to be presented, all in addition to the *tāmîd.* In this respect, there is no distinction made between the first and seventh days, which are sacred convocations, and the five days of the festival intervening between the first and seventh days. Such a distinction is clearly evident, however, in the regimen of offerings for the autumn festival, as prescribed in Numbers 29:12–38.

16. *In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month.* This entry employs a scribal system for dating documents by which months are identified by ordinal numbers, "the first month," "the seventh month," and so on. This system was also used in Leviticus 23, and characterizes other priestly laws and narratives. It was apparently introduced in the near-exilic period, beginning in

the late seventh century B.C.E., which would account for its frequent utilization in Jeremiah (Jer 1:3, 28:1, 17, 36:9, 22), and in 2 Kings 25:1, 25. Most telling is the attestation of a very similar system in a Hebrew ostracon from Arad, level VI, a stratum dated to the years preceding the Babylonian destruction in the early sixth century B.C.E. Thus, in Arad ostracon 7, lines 3–4, we read: *lʿśry, b* 1 *lḥdš ʿd hššh lḥdš* "—of the tenth [month], on the first of the month up to the sixth of the month." In lines 6–7 of the same ostracon, we read further: *bšnym lḥdš bʿśry* "On the second of the month, in the tenth [month]" (Aharoni 1981:22).

a paschal sacrifice to YHWH.

In biblical Hebrew usage, the term *pesaḥ*, taken alone, consistently identifies the Paschal sacrifice, not the festival by that name (see Notes to Num 9:1–14; Levine 1993:297). This term surely warrants discussion and requires considerable clarification. In the simple stem, the verb *p-s-ḥ* means "to straddle, hedge," not "to pass over," which has yielded the traditional misnomer "Passover." The fact is that "passing over, hopping" is the sense of the Piel, not of the Qal, or simple stem of the verbal root *p-s-ḥ*. Curiously, we find both meanings expressed in a single chapter, 1 Kings 18. Whereas it is said that the Baal priests "hopped around the altar" (*wayyepasseḥû ʿal hammizbēah*—1 Kings 18:26), expressing the Piel stem, Elijah taunted the Baal prophets, in the form of a rhetorical question, as follows: "How long will you keep on straddling (*pōseḥîm ʿal*) the two branches?" (1 Kings 18:21). The meaning of the simple stem is also expressed in Isaiah 31:5: "Like the birds that fly, even so will YHWH of Hosts shield Jerusalem; shielding and saving, protecting (*pasôaḥ*) and rescuing." In fact, this verse is cited in the Tannaitic Midrash on Exodus, the Mekhilta, *Bō*', paragraph 7, where the verb *p-s-ḥ* is explained as "protection" (*ḥayis*). And so, the Pesaḥ sacrifice, offered at twilight or near evening, commemorates God's sparing of the homes of the Israelites in Egypt. He did not spare these homes by hopping or passing over them, but rather by standing over them to protect the Israelites from the punishing plague of the firstborn that he had unleashed against the Egyptians.

17. *And on the fifteenth day of the same month.* Beginning the following morning, on the fifteenth day of the same month, is the seven-day festival on which *maṣṣôt* are eaten. The fifteenth day is declared a day of pilgrimage. The Hebrew term *ḥag* means "pilgrimage," and its usage is discrete, which is to say that any occasion so designated actually involved undertaking a pilgrimage to a cult site. Note that the festival of first fruits (Num 28:26–31) is not referred to as a *ḥag*, nor are the New Moon of the seventh month and the tenth day of that month, Yom Kippurim. Hebrew *ḥag* is cognate with Arabic *ḥajj* "pilgrimage" (*Britannica, Micropaedia* IV:844), and, indeed, the pilgrimage is a major feature of Islamic religion. The geminate verb *ḥ-g-g* in Hebrew is undoubtedly denominative, and means "to celebrate a pilgrimage festival" (1 Sam 30:6, Ps

42:5), as further indicated by its normally cognate syntax, *ḥāgag . . . ḥag* (Exod 12:14, Lev 23:39, 41, Zech 14:16, 18–19). The noun *ḥag* itself is more likely derived from a middle-weak root, *ḥ-w-g*, expressed in the noun *ḥûg* "arc, ellipse," descriptive of the horizon, or firmament (Isa 40:22, Job 22:14, Prov 8:27). The Hebrew *meḥûgāh* is a tool used to draw an arc or a circle, like a compass (Isa 44:13). The term *ḥag* expresses movement, that of wending a path toward a cultic destination, or possibly of a processional undertaken at a cult site.

The import of this verse is somewhat unclear, however. In Numbers 29:12, the duration of the autumn pilgrimage is stated unambiguously: "You shall celebrate a pilgrimage festival to YHWH for seven days." But here, the formulation is less precise: The *ḥag* of the first month occurs on the fifteenth day of the month, and for seven days thereafter *maṣṣôt* are to be eaten. The same uncertainty is evident in Leviticus 23, from which the formulations of festival law in Numbers 28–29 were undoubtedly taken. Thus, Leviticus 23:6 parallels Numbers 28:17 in its ambiguity, whereas Leviticus 23:34 parallels Numbers 29:12 in its clarity. Some have understood both statements as having the same import: The pilgrimage of the first month was to last for seven days, namely, for as long as unleavened bread was to be eaten (Levine 1989b:156, 267). The difference in formulation noted just above is to be taken seriously, and we are to conclude that according to both Leviticus 23 and Numbers 28, the autumn pilgrimage lasted for seven days, whereas the pilgrimage of the first month lasted for only one day. This would be in line with the legislation of Deuteronomy 16:1–7, where we are told that the Israelites were to return to their tents the morning after the Paschal sacrifice was offered, thereby ending the pilgrimage on the fifteenth day of the first month. More will be said on this subject in the Comments. For the derivation of the Hebrew word *maṣṣāh*, see the Notes to Numbers 6:15; Levine 1993:225.

18. *a sanctuary convocation*. In the combination *miqrāʾ qōdeš*, "a sanctuary convocation the component *qōdeš* expresses either the sacred character of the occasion or its venue, indicating that it took place at the Sanctuary. Similarly, the Hebrew noun *miqrāʾ* may refer to the place of assembly (Isa 4:5), or to the occasion of an assembly. Thus, in the parallelism of Isaiah 1:13, "New Moon and Sabbath//Proclaiming of a convocation (*qerōʾ miqrāʾ*)," the term *miqrāʾ* clearly refers to a time of convocation. This meaning would suit the function of *miqrāʾ* in the composite term *miqrāʾ qōdeš*, but there is a further nuance to the verb *q-r-ʾ*, and it is the notion of invitation, of summoning others to a place or an occasion. This sense is expressed in the passive participle, *qerūʾîm* "invitees," those "called" to partake of a sacrifice at a cult site in 1 Sam 9:13, 22 (see Notes on Num 1:16; Levine 1993:138). Ugaritic attests the same usage. In *KTU*$_2$ 1.161, a liturgy of the royal ancestor cult, departed ancestors and Rephaim are summoned to join in the coronation of the new king of Ugarit,

after the reigning king had died. There, too, the operative verb is *qra* "summon, invite," which occurs no less than nine times in the liturgical call to the ancestors (Levine-de Tarragon 1984:650, lines 8–9, 11–12).

This best represents the notion behind the term *miqrāʾ qōdeš*: It designates an occasion on which the community congregated at the Sanctuary, after being summoned there. In Numbers 10:2, we read that trumpets were used "for assembling the community (*lemqiqrāʾ hāʿēdāh*) and for undertaking the march of the corps" (see Notes to Num 10:2; Levine 1993:305). This suggests that *qōdeš* means "sanctuary," and we could with reason translate the designation *miqrāʾ qōdeš* in Numbers 28–29 as "sanctuary convocation." Priestly texts frequently employ the term *qōdeš* to mean "sanctuary, shrine" (Exod 26:33, 28:29, 35, Lev 16:2, Num 3:28, 32), and this term of reference is normally used in the prophecies of Ezekiel 40–48 that describe the restored temple of Jerusalem. This meaning is frequent in liturgical texts (Ps 29:2, 96:9, 134:2). The determined form, *haqqōdeš*, means "the Sanctuary, the shrine" in such composite terms as *šeqel haqqōdeš* "sanctuary weight" (Exod 38:34), and *kelê haqqōdeš* "the vessels of the sanctuary" (Num 4:15). Similarly, the superlative *qōdeš haqqodāšîm* "the Holy of Holies," describes a part of the Sanctuary (Num 18:11). Above, in Numbers 28:7, *baqqōdeš* meant "in the Sanctuary."

However we translate the Hebrew *miqrāʾ qōdeš*, we can reliably conclude that attendance at the Sanctuary was a primary feature of an event so designated. The distribution indicates that the composite term *miqrāʾ qōdeš* is distinctly priestly, occurring only in priestly sections of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, and probably originating in the Holiness Code, represented by Leviticus 23 (Levine 1989b:154–155, s.v. Lev 23:2–3). Nevertheless, various priestly texts use this technical term differently. In Leviticus 23:3, the Sabbath is designated *miqrāʾ qōdeš*, whereas in Numbers 28:9–10, above, it is not. This is one of the distinctive features of Numbers 28:1–15, already noted above.

On occasions designated *miqrāʾ qōdeš*, a prohibition of "assigned tasks" (*melāʾkāh*) is prescribed. The basic notion embodied in the term *melāʾkāh* is that of an assignment; literally, what one is sent to do. We now know this from Ugaritic, which attests finite forms of the verb *lak* "to send, dispatch" (Whitaker 1972:394, s.v. *lak*). In biblical Hebrew, we lack finite verbal forms derived from this root, possessing only the noun *malʾāk* "messenger, angel" (Levine 1989b:155, s.v. Lev 23:3). There are, however, two differing formulations of the prohibition of assigned tasks: (1) *kol melāʾkāh* "all assigned tasks" (Exod 12:16, Lev 23:3, 28, Num 29:7), and (2) *kol meleʾket ʿabōdāh* "any manner of assigned labor," in the present verse, and further, in Numbers 28:26, 29:1, 7, 12, 35 (cf. Lev 23:7, 28, 35). The application of these two formulations is not altogether consistent, but it would appear that *kol melāʾkāh* is more inclusive, and therefore more restrictive, and is accordingly reserved for days having the status of a Sabbath, like the Sabbath itself, or the Day of Atonement, the tenth day of the seventh month, regarded as "Sabbath-like." In contrast, the formulation *kol mele'ket ʿabōdāh* is normally applied to the other annual occasions, and is assumed to be less restrictive, with the prohibition affecting only those assigned tasks that constitute *ʿabōdāh* "labor." There are some anomalies, however. In Exodus 12:16, the first and seventh days of the Passover are characteristically designated *miqrāʾ qōdeš*, and yet the accompanying formulation is *kol melāʾkāh lōʾ yēʿāśeh bāhem* "no assigned tasks may be performed on them." But, the passive formulation and other unusual features of the Passover law of Exodus 12:1–20 suggest that it is a later text, using less precise terminology. In conclusion, it seems that the Holiness Code introduced a new category of cultic events, *miqrāʾ qōdeš* "sanctuary convocation." How such an event interacted with the *ḥag* and what it meant for Israelites in their settlements, away from the Sanctuary, will be discussed in the Comments.

19–21. *You shall present an offering by fire.* The sacrifices here are substantially the same as those prescribed for the New Moon in Numbers 28:11–14, above, with only minor differences in formulation. The content of the libation for the festival of the first month is not specified in Numbers 28:24, as it was in Numbers 28:14 with respect to the New Moon, because once the recipe for the libation was fixed, it was unnecessary to repeat it each time.

22. *for performing expiation rites over you.* The meanings attendant upon the Hebrew formula *lekappēr ʿal-* have already been discussed several times (see Notes to Num 8:12; Levine 1993:276–277). Here, usage of Piel *kippēr* is functional and does not imply actual physical contact. The prescribed sin-offering would serve to secure expiation for the offenses of the Israelites, thereby restoring the Sanctuary to a state of purity.

23–24. The present provisions follow the established pattern, and all of the terms of reference have been explained in Notes to Numbers 28:2–8, above. Numbers 28:24 resonates with the superscription, Numbers 28:2.

25. *And on the seventh day.* The seventh day is again designated *miqrāʾ qōdeš* when assigned labor tasks are prohibited. Whereas in the ritual code for the autumn festival (Num 29:12–38) the detailed sacrifices for each day are registered, in Numbers 28:16–25, the present passage, they are not. This difference will be discussed in Notes to Numbers 29.

Public Rites for the Day of First Fruits (Num 28:26–31)

The celebrations of the first month are followed by "the day of the offering of first fruits (*yôm habbikkûrîm*) from the new crop," an occasion called "your [festival of] weeks" (*šābūʿōtêkem*), and designated a sanctuary convocation when assigned labor tasks are forbidden. The information provided is extremely sparse, in fact. No date for this one-day festival is given, nor is the basis for its scheduling explained. It is not classified as a pilgrimage (*ḥag*), just as in Leviticus 23 it was not named *ḥag*. We have, therefore, three festivals, but only two pilgrimage festivals. One assumes, based on the provisions of Leviticus 23:15–22, that the day of offering the first fruits was scheduled seven weeks after an unspecified day within the seven-day *maṣṣôt* festival. It was at that point that the counting of the period of seven weeks commenced. Once again, a regimen of sacrifices additional to the daily offerings is ordained (28:26–31).

26. *And on the day of the offering of first fruits.* The term *bikkûrîm* "first fruits" is explained in Notes to Numbers 18:12–13, (Levine 1993:446), where the first fruits were listed as one of the priestly perquisites. In the Hebrew construction, *minḥāh ḥadāšāh*, adjectival *haḍāšāh* "new," characterizes the new crop from which the grain for the offering was taken. This is good priestly usage. In the blessing of Leviticus 26:10, we read: "You shall eat old grain (*yāšān*), and have to clear out the old grain to make room for the new grain (*ḥādāš*)." Numbers 28:26 is formulated in a way that presupposes existing events and cultic requirements. Both the day of the first fruits and the requirement to present a grain offering from the new crop on that occasion are assumed to be in force, and known to the reader. Calling this occasion "your [festival] of weeks, (literally, *šābūʿōtêkem* = "your weeks") surely resonates with the Deuteronomic formulation of the festival law: "You shall count off seven weeks (*šābūʿōt*). When the sickle is first put to the standing grain shall you begin to count seven weeks. Then you shall observe a pilgrimage festival of weeks (*ḥag šābūʿōt*) to YHWH, your God," and so on (Deut 16:9–10). So, *besabuʿotekem* of our verse resonates with the Deuteronomic formulation. It is also significant, as noted by Ginsberg (1982:76), that the diction of Leviticus 23 did not persist into Numbers 28–29. Leviticus 23:15–16 had used the term *šabbāt* in the extraordinary sense of "week," a usage expressive of the Holiness Code, where the concept and symbolism of the Sabbath are applied to other occasions and units of time. The Festival of Weeks is declared *miqrāʾ qōdeš*, when assigned labor tasks are forbidden.

27–31. *Apart from the burnt offering.* The specifications stated here correlate precisely with the pattern established in Numbers 28:11–15 for New Moons, and repeated in Numbers 28:19–23 for the *maṣṣôt* festival of the first month. The passage ends with the usual stipulation that what has been ordained is apart from the regimen of daily sacrifices. There is a symmetry to the legislation governing the two occasions, the *maṣṣôt* festival and the festival of first fruits: In each case there is to be a distinctive offering expressing the particular symbolism of the occasion, plus a fixed regimen of burnt offerings, and accompanying grain offerings and libations. There is also a difference, however: The Paschal sacrifice precedes the sacrifices of the first morning of the *maṣṣôt* festival by a day, whereas the grain offering from the new crop occurs on the actual day of the festival.

NUMBERS 29:1–30:1: TRANSLATION

29 [1]And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall hold a sanctuary convocation; you may not perform any manner of assigned labor. It shall be a day of blaring [the horn] for you.

[2]You shall perform a burnt offering, to produce a pleasing aroma for YHWH: one bull of the herd, one ram, yearling lambs—seven, without blemish.

[3]And their grain offering; semolina flour mixed with oil, three-tenths [of an *ephah*] for the bull, two-tenths [of an *ephah*] for the ram.

[4]And one-tenth of an *ephah* for each lamb, for the seven lambs.

[5]And one he-goat for the sin-offering, for performing expiation rites over you.

[6]Apart from the burnt offering of the New Moon and its grain offering, and the regular burnt offering and its grain offering, and their libations according to their rule, to produce a pleasant aroma, an offering by fire to YHWH.

[7]And on the tenth of the same, seventh month you shall hold a sanctuary convocation, when you must practice self-affliction. You may not perform any manner of assigned labor.

[8]You shall present a burnt offering to YHWH, to produce a pleasing aroma: one bull of the herd, one ram; yearling lambs—seven, without blemish, shall you provide.

[9]And their grain offering: semolina flour mixed with oil; three-tenths [of an *ephah*] for the bull, two-tenths [of an *ephah*] for the one ram.

[10]One-tenth [of an *ephah*] apiece for each lamb, for the seven lambs.

[11]One he-goat for the sin-offering, apart from the sin-offering of the expiation rites and the regular burnt offering and its grain offering, and their libations.

[12]And on the fifteenth day of the seventh month you shall hold a sanctuary convocation; you may not perform any manner of assigned labor. You shall celebrate a pilgrimage festival for YHWH for seven days.

[13]You shall present a burnt offering, as an offering by fire to produce a pleasing aroma for YHWH: bulls of the herd—thirteen; rams—two; yearling lambs—fourteen; they shall be without blemish.

[14]And their grain offering: semolina flour mixed with oil, three-tenths [*ephah*] for each bull, for the thirteen bulls; two-tenths [*ephah*] for each ram, for both rams.

[15]And one-tenth [of an *ephah*] apiece for each lamb, for the fourteen lambs.

[16]And a he-goat for the sin offering, apart from the regular burnt offering, its grain offering and its libation.

[17]And on the second day: bulls of the herd—twelve; rams—two; yearling lambs—fourteen, without blemish.

[18]And their grain offering and their libations, for the bulls, for the rams and for the lambs in proportion to their number, according to the rule.

[19]And one he-goat for the sin-offering, apart from the regular burnt offering and its grain offering, and their libations.

[20]And on the third day: bulls—eleven; rams—two; yearling lambs—fourteen, without blemish.

[21]And their grain offering and their libations, for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, in proportion to their number, according to the rule.

[22]And one he-goat for the sin-offering, apart from the regular burnt offering and its grain offering, and its libation.

[23]And on the fourth day: bulls—ten; rams—two; yearling lambs—fourteen, without blemish.

[24]Their grain offering and their libations, for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, in proportion to their number according to the rule.

[25]And one he-goat for the sin-offering, apart from the regular burnt offering and its libation.

[26]And on the fifth day: bulls—nine; rams—two; yearling lambs—fourteen, without blemish.

[27]And their grain offering and their libations, for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, in proportion to their number, according to the rule.

[28]And one he-goat for the sin-offering, apart from the regular burnt offering and its grain offering and its libation.

[29]And on the sixth day: bulls—eight; rams—two; yearling lambs—fourteen, without blemish.

[30]And their grain offering and their libations, for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, in proportion to their number according to the rule.

[31]And one he-goat for the sin-offering, apart from the regular burnt offering, its grain offering and its libation.

[32]And on the seventh day: bulls—seven; rams—two; yearling lambs—fourteen, without blemish.

[33]And their grain offering and their libations, for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, in proportion to their number according to the rule.

[34]And one he-goat for the sin-offering, apart from the regular burnt offering, its grain offering and its libation.

[35]On the eighth day you shall hold a sacred gathering; you may not perform any manner of assigned labor.

[36]You shall present a burnt offering, an offering by fire, to produce a pleasing aroma for YHWH: one bull, one ram; yearling lambs—seven, without blemish.

[37]Their grain offerings and their libations, for the bull, for the ram, and for the lambs, in proportion to their number according to the rule.

[38]And one he-goat for the sin-offering, apart from the regular burnt offering, and its grain offering and its libation.

[39]These you shall perform for YHWH on your set festivals—apart from your votice offerings and your voluntary offerings—to serve as your burnt offerings, your grain offerings, your libations, and as your sacred gifts of greeting.

30 [1]Moses spoke to the Israelite people in accordance with all that YHWH had commanded Moses.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 29:1–30:1: THE AUTUMN OF THE YEAR

Public Rites for the New Moon of the Seventh Month (Num 29:1–6)

As Numbers 29 begins, the cultic calendar is in the autumn of the year, the seventh month, which is virtually crowded with significant, annual cultic occasions. The seventh month is dominated by the extended *ḥag* beginning on the fifteenth of the month. As we know from other biblical sources, this constituted the major pilgrimage of the year at the festival of ingathering. It was the forthcoming *ḥag* that made of the New Moon of the seventh month an exceptional occasion among the New Moons of the year.

1. *a day of blaring [the horn].* The Hebrew form *terûʿāh* "blaring" is explained in Notes to Numbers 10:5; (Levine 1993:305–306). In Leviticus 23:24, this day is called *zikrôn terûʿāh* "commemoration by blaring [the horn]." As in Leviticus 23:23–25, so in the present passage, no reason is given for blowing the horn on this occasion. Other biblical sources inform us, however, that on the New Moon of the seventh month the forthcoming *ḥag* was announced in this way, so that Israelites from all over the land might prepare for the pilgrimage. Thus we read: "Blow the horn on the New Moon (*baḥōdeš*), on the full moon for the day of our pilgrimage festival" (Ps 81:4). In a singular way, this New Moon had become *miqrāʾ qōdeš* "a sanctuary convocation."

2–5. The special sacrifice for the New Moon of the seventh month consisted of one bull, one ram and seven yearling lambs, with their appropriate grain offerings and libations as accompaniments.

6. *Apart from the burnt offering.* The above offerings were in addition to the *tāmîd*, and in addition to the burnt offering regularly prescribed for all New Moons. This requirement yielded a total of three bulls, two rams, fifteen lambs and one he-goat to be offered on the morning of the New Moon of the seventh month. Note that the exclusionary clause does not mention the sin-offering, because as a rule, only one sin-offering was required on any given

day, the salient exception being the tenth day of the seventh month. On that occasion, to be known as the Day of Atonement, the elaborate purification of the Sanctuary involved special sin-offerings in addition to the usual he-goat. This is explained in Notes to Numbers 29:11, below.

according to their rule

The meaning of the Hebrew formula *kammišpāṭ* "according to the rule" (here we have *kemišpāṭām* "according to their rule") is explained in Notes to Numbers 15:24; Levine 1993:396–397. In Numbers 29, this idiomatic formula functions editorially to refer to cultic requirements that have already been specified, thereby eliminating the necessity of repeating them. This is so here, and in Numbers 29:18, 21, 24, 27, 30, 34, 37, which cover the second through eighth days of the autumn pilgrimage festival.

Public Rites for the Tenth Day of the Seventh Month (Num 29:7–11)

The only clues to the singular nature of the tenth day of the seventh month are the reference to practicing self-affliction in Numbers 29:7, and mention of "the sin-offering of expiation" (*ḥaṭṭā't hakkippûrîm*) in Numbers 29:11, below. This is, of course, the Day of Atonement (*yôm kippûrîm*), whose full meaning is brought out in Leviticus 16, and in Leviticus 23:26–32. Here, this occasion merely has the status of *miqrā' qōdeš* "a sanctuary convocation," and it is somewhat surprising that nothing is said about the sabbatical status of the Day of Atonement.

7. *when you must practice self-affliction.* This is a functional translation of the Hebrew *we'innîtem 'et napšōtêkem*, literally, "you must torment your bodies" (Lev 16:31, 23:27). As Ibn Ezra, the medieval commentator, observed the idiom *'innāh nepeš* always means fasting in biblical usage. Thus, we read in Psalm 35:13: *'innêtî baṣṣôm napšî* "I tormented myself by fasting." The prophet of the Exile denounces the false piety of the immoral, who expect God to respond to their fasting: "Why, when we fasted, did you not see? When we tormented our body (*'innînû napšēnû*), did you pay no heed?" (Isa 58:3, and cf. Isa 58:5).

8–10. The burnt offering for the tenth day of the seventh month consisted of one bull, one ram and seven yearling lambs, with their appropriate grain offerings and libations.

11. A he-goat is to be offered as a sin-offering, "apart from the sin-offering of expiation" (*ḥaṭṭā't hakkippûrîm*). As observed above, in Notes to Numbers 29:6, it was normal to have only one sin-offering on a given day. The Day of Atonement was a clear exception. The designation *ḥaṭṭā't hakkippûrîm* occurs only once again, in Exodus 30:10, within a passage that speaks of the manufacture of the incense altar. There we read: "Aaron shall perform rites of expiation upon its horns once each year; with some of the blood of the sin-offering of

expiation shall he perform rites of expiation over it for your generations," and so on. The immediate context of Exodus 30:1–10 makes it clear that reference is to the provisions of Leviticus 16, which call for a double sin-offering, consisting of both a bull and a he-goat, to be performed on the Day of Atonement. This occasion was scheduled to occur once a year on the tenth day of the seventh month, as specified in Leviticus 16:29–34, and the very occasion addressed by the present law.

The distinctive feature of this rite of expiation was the introduction of blood, taken from both the bull and the he-goat, inside the Shrine of the Tabernacle, where the incense altar stood. This blood was sprinkled on the horns of the incense altar by the High Priest, who then took a handful of incense and a pan full of coals from atop the incense altar and some of the pure incense, and proceeded further into the Holy of Holies. There he lit the incense so that it beclouded the inner sanctum, and then sprinkled the blood over the *kappōret*-lid of the Ark. On his way out, the High Priest sprinkled some of the same blood on the horns of the altar of burnt offerings, which stood in the Tabernacle courtyard (Lev 16:12–19; see Notes to Num 28:15). This complex of ritual acts in its entirety is what is referred to as *ḥaṭṭa't hakkippûrîm* in our verse and in Exodus 30:10.

Public Rites for the Autumn Pilgrimage Festival and the Recessional of the Eighth Day
(Num 29:12–30:1)

On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, the major *ḥag* "pilgrimage festival" of the year began. The festival itself lasted seven days, with the first day declared a sanctuary convocation (*miqrā' qōdĕs*). But instead of celebrating the seventh day as a sacred convocation, as it was observed in the *maṣṣôt* festival of the first month, the eighth day was celebrated as "a sacred gathering," Hebrew *'aṣeret*, and was proclaimed *miqrā' qōdeš.*

During the seven-day *maṣṣôt* festival, the regimen of burnt offerings was the same for each of the days, including even the first and seventh days, which were declared sanctuary convocations. Here, in the case of the autumn pilgrimage festival, we observe a downward scaling of bulls for the burnt offerings over a seven-day period. The large number of bulls decreases by one each day, from thirteen on the first day to seven on the seventh day. The accompanying grain offerings and libations are scaled down accordingly, by units. On no other single occasion legislated in the Torah are more than two bulls required. There are indications of larger patterns in use. Balaam twice requested seven bulls and seven rams as burnt offerings in his effort to attract the God of Israel (Num 23:1, 29), and the same symmetrical grouping of animals is ordained for each day of the seven days of the *maṣṣôt* festival in Ezekiel 45:23 (cf. Job 42:8, 2 Chron 29:21). But, in terms of priestly legislation, the sacrificing of a total of seventy bulls during the seven days of the autumn pilgrimage festival is unparalleled. Although the number of rams and yearling lambs remains constant throughout the seven days, two rams and fourteen yearling lambs each day, this regimen in itself represents an elaborate assemblage. The more normal pattern of one bull, one ram and seven yearling lambs as burnt offerings, resumes in the prescriptions for the sacred gathering of the eighth day.

12. *You shall celebrate a pilgrimage festival for YHWH for seven days.* The meaning of Hebrew *ḥag* "pilgrimage" and the force of the cognate syntax represented by *weḥaggōtem ḥag* have been explained in Notes to Numbers 28:16. The formulation here is precise: The pilgrimage is to last seven days, whereas the first day is a sanctuary convocation on which assigned labor tasks are prohibited.

13–16. The specifications for the first day of the festival, the fifteenth of the seventh month, are spelled out in detail. In the subsequent prescriptions for the second through seventh days of the festival, the reader is referred to the initial statement.

17–19. *And on the second day.* Beginning in Numbers 29:17, and continuing through Numbers 29:34, we have a uniform series of prescriptions. The standard formulation is established here, in Numbers 29:17–19. The entry begins with the numbered day, *ûbayyôm haššēnî,* "and on the second day." This is followed by the reduced number of bulls and the fixed number of rams and yearling sheep for the burnt offering of that day. There is then a summary statement to the effect that the grain offerings and libations that accompany the burnt offerings of bulls, rams and sheep are to be presented *bemispārām kammišpāṭ* "in proportion to their number, according to the rule" (see Notes to Num 29:6, above).

20–22. *And on the third day: bulls—eleven.* The number *ʿaštê ʿāśār* "eleven" (also *ʿaštê ʿeśrēh*) embodies a cognate of the Akkadian numeral *ištēn* "one," hence: "one + ten" = "eleven" (Exod 26:7, passim, Num 7:72). It is usually employed as an alternative to *ʾaḥad ʿāśār* in chronistic writing when registering dates (Deut 1:3, 2 Kings 25:2, Jer 1:3, Ezek 26:1). Usage in biblical Hebrew may be due to the influence of Neo-Babylonian scribal terminology.

23–34. There follows a sequence of similarly formulated entries for the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh days of the festival that require no further explanation.

35. *On the eighth day you shall hold a sacred gathering.* This occasion is first ordained in Leviticus 23:36. In the language of Deuteronomy 16:8, the seventh day of the *maṣṣôt* festival is likewise termed *ʿaṣeret,* not *miqrāʾ qōdeš* as it is in priestly writings. The two terms would appear to designate similar types of occasions. The Hebrew *ʿaṣeret* (also *ʿaṣārāh*) derives from the verb *ʿ-ṣ-r* "to detain, hold in, hold back," and is often said of withholding rain (Deut

11:17) and blocking of conception in the womb (Gen 20:18). Particularly relevant is the rare idiom *ʿ-ṣ-r b-* in the words of Samuel, when he beheld Saul: *zeh yaʿṣōr beʿammî* "This one shall govern my people" (1 Sam 9:17). The sense is that of holding the people together, as suggested by Job 12:15: "When he contains the waters (*yaʿṣōr bammayim*) they dry up/When he lets them loose, they engulf the land."

In 1 Samuel 21:8, we read of a royal official who was "detained in the presence of YHWH" (*neʿeṣār lipnê YHWH*). We are not told why he was so detained, but we are perhaps to assume that the person in question had yet to fulfill some ritual obligation that required his presence, or that he was awaiting purification. On this basis, *ʿaṣeret*, or *ʿaṣārāh* would signify an occasion on which the people were required to remain assembled in the area of the Sanctuary. The sense of a group bound together is preserved in the characterization *ʿaṣeret bōgedîm* "a band of traitors" (Jer 9:1).

The form *ʿaṣārāh* is parallel with *ḥag* "pilgrimage festival" in Amos 5:11, and in Joel 1:14//2:15 it is parallel with *ṣôm* "fast day." The two verbs used in connection with *ʿaṣārāh*, namely, *q-r-ʾ* "to summon," and the Piel *qiddēš* "to proclaim as sacred," are also significant. In 2 Kings 10:20 we read: "And Jehu ordered: 'Proclaim a sacred gathering to the Baal (*qaddešû ʿaṣārāh labbaʿal*)!' And they so convened one" (*wayyiqrāʾû*). In Joel 1:14//2:15 we read: *qaddešû ṣôm qirʾû ʿaṣārāh* "Proclaim a fast day/Convene a sacred gathering." It is likely, therefore, that *miqrāʾ qōdeš* is a replacement term for *ʿaṣārāh* and *ʿaṣeret*, and we note that the same prohibition of assigned labor tasks applied on both occasions. The fact that the *ʿaṣeret* comes at the conclusion of a protracted period of celebration, both in the instance of Deuteronomy 6:8 and in priestly, festival legislation, undoubtedly suggested the rendering of the Septuagint, Greek *ʾexódion* "finale, recessional." The original basis of scheduling an *ʿaṣeret* on the eighth day after the autumn pilgrimage festival began will be suggested in the Comments. It would be logical to assume that it represents a once distinct sacred occasion later attached to the autumn festival.

36–38. The regimen of sacrifices prescribed for the *ʿaṣeret* of the eighth day resembles the offerings prescribed for the New Moon of the seventh month (Num 29:2–5) and, for the most part, those of the tenth day of the seventh month (Num 29:8–11). Only one bull is to be sacrificed as a burnt offering, instead of the two bulls prescribed for New Moons and festivals.

39. *These you shall perform for YHWH.* This verse summarizes the provisions of Numbers 28–29, where public rites for the annual occasions are prescribed. Technically, Numbers 28:1–15, covering the daily public rites and those of Sabbaths and New Moons, do not speak of annual occasions. A play on Hebrew *môʿēd* "set time" is probably to be seen in the superscription, Numbers 28:2. There, the Israelites were commanded to present the full regimen of sacrificial offerings to God "at its set time" (*bemôʿadô*)," a theme resumed

here, in the summary statement. We are now being told that the Israelites are to perform all of the above sacrificial rites *bemôʿadêkem* "on your set occasions." The composition of Numbers 29:39 is parenthetical. The ordained public rites are "apart from" (*lebad min*) private, voluntary offerings. These were customarily pledged, donated and presented by Israelites while on their annual pilgrimages to the Sanctuary. Priestly legislation scheduled such pilgrimages to occur on the annual festivals. For itself, the pattern of interaction between public and private ritual can be seen in the narrative of 1 Samuel 1. There we read that Elkanah and his family undertake an annual pilgrimage to Shiloh, and that on one of these visits to the central Sanctuary the barren Hannah had pronounced a vow (1 Sam 1:11–12).

Basic legislation governing the *neder* "vow, votive offering," its pronouncement and fulfillment under varying circumstances, may be found in Leviticus 7:16–18, 22:21, 27:1–8, Numbers 6:1–21 [the vow of the Nazirite], 15:3, 8, Deuteronomy 23:19, 22. In fact, Numbers 30:2–17 is entirely devoted to vows pronounced by young women, and the legal problems arising from this practice. See Notes to Numbers 6:2; (Levine 1993:219), for an explanation of the term *neder* itself, and the Comments to Numbers 30 for a discussion of the *neder* as a prominent aspect of private religion in biblical Israel. The code of law governing vows was appended to the schedule of public rites, Numbers 28–29, precisely because it was customary to pronounce vows on the occasion of a pilgrimage festival to a sanctuary. The fulfillment of a cultic vow would most often be in the form of a sacrificial offering of the variety of the *zebaḥ* "sacred feast." The distinctive feature of the vow was its optional basis. Once having pronounced a vow, an individual was bound to fulfill it, but initially, no Israelite was obliged to make a vow.

and your voluntary offerings

As a kind of sacrifice, Hebrew *nedābāh* "voluntary offering" is often mentioned in connection with the *neder* and the *tôdāh* "thanksgiving offering" (Lev 7:16–17, 22:21, Num 15:3, Deut 23:24, and see Notes to Num 15:3; Levine 1993:390). All three offerings were voluntary, at least initially so. In a general sense, the term *nedābāh* may signify any type of contribution to a temple or cult.

to serve as your burnt offerings

The functional sense of prepositional *lamed* in *leʿōlōtêkem,* "for your burnt offerings," and so forth, is "to serve as, to be for" your burnt offerings (cf. the same syntax in Num 6:14). The technical problem in this statement is that no "sacred gifts of greeting" (*šelāmîm*) were prescribed in Numbers 28–29. For the meaning of the term *šelāmîm,* see Notes to Numbers 6:14; Levine 1993:224–225. The involvement of the *šelāmîm* in scheduled public rites was extremely limited; in priestly legislation it was prescribed only for the Festival of Weeks, the Pentecost (Lev 23:19). We must conclude, therefore, that this statement is imprecise, and the same is true of Numbers 10:10, which ordains that trumpets be blown when sacrifices were offered on New Moons and annual festivals. There, too, general mention is made of the *šelāmîm* offering (Levine 1993:306).

30¹The phrasing of this statement of compliance is peculiar: As stated, Moses conveyed to the Israelites all that YHWH had commanded Moses! We would have expected an independent object pronoun, with Moses as its antecedent, as in Numbers 17:26: "Moses did as YHWH commanded him (*ʾōtō*)."

COMMENTS

Numbers 28–29 represent the major statement of the priestly school on the character and structure of the public cult of biblical Israel. In historical terms, it is best to think of this ritual code as representing the cult of the Second Temple of Jerusalem, operative during most of the Persian Period (approximately 538–323 B.C.E.). Although some of the rites ordained in Numbers 28–29 may well have been practiced before the Babylonian Exile that began in 586 B.C.E., other features of these composite rituals reflect developments subsequent to the period of the First Temple. A discussion of the problems involved in dating the priestly writings of the Torah, and the reasons for assigning much of the priestly code to the postexilic period, may be found in the Introduction to the Book of Numbers, Section E, "The Context of the Priestly Source" (Levine 1993:101–108).

In Numbers 28–29, as in Torah law generally, the prescribed regimen of sacrifices is presented as God's commandment to Moses and the Israelites of his generation prior to their entry into the land of Canaan. This is the traditional setting whose historicity has been challenged by modern research (Levine 1989b:xxv–xxviii). In terms of its literary history, the ritual code of Numbers 28–29 should be studied against the background of the cultic calendar preserved in Leviticus 23, and in relation to other Torah sources that represent earlier phases of priestly legislation. In a larger sense, Numbers 28–29 must be understood as part of the entire history of sacrificial worship in biblical Israel, and throughout the ancient Near East, in comparative perspective.

Of primary concern is the projected structure of the public cult, including the composition of its scheduled rites. The mode of a given sacrifice, how it was offered to the deity and received by him, and the method of its subsequent disposition also require elucidation, because specific modes of worship express distinctive concepts of God, who is the recipient of sacrificial offerings. Equally absorbing is the question of what all of the prescribed ritual activity meant to the ancient Israelites of biblical times. What central concerns did such activity address, and why was it deemed to be so important? All of these considerations have a direct bearing on the interpretation of Numbers 28–29.

COMMENT 1:
CULTIC CALENDARS: NUMBERS 28–29, LEVITICUS 23 AND RELATED SOURCES

G. B. Gray (Gray-*ICC*:401–407) has provided a full discussion of Numbers 28–29, focusing on their clear relation to Leviticus 23. There can be no doubt that the author of Numbers 28–29 was cognizant of the calendar of festivals preserved in Leviticus 23 and familiar with its primary components, at the very least. Numbers 28–29 regularly paraphrase the formulaic statements of Leviticus 23, and to a large extent adopt its overall framework. Gray noted that the prescriptions for sacrifice in Ezekiel 45:18–46:15 are formulated in a manner similar to Numbers 28–29, just as the less extensive provisions of Numbers 15, governing grain offerings and libations, also detail quantities and substances in much the same way. Gray is also correct, however, in pointing out that we would be hard-pressed to locate in other Torah sources a basis for all of the precise quantities of sacrificial matériel set forth in the ritual code of Numbers 28–29, or for the elaborate structure of the public cult as outlined therein.

Numbers 28–29 may be regarded as complementary to Leviticus 23, taking up where Leviticus 23 left off. Thus, Leviticus 23 repeatedly ordains offerings by fire for festivals and sacred days by stating: *wehiqrabtem ʾiššeh le-YHWH* "You shall present an offering by fire to YHWH," or through a variation of the same formula. Such is stipulated for the festival of the first month (Lev 23:8), for the New Moon of the seventh month (Lev 23:25), for the tenth day of the seventh month, the Day of Atonement (Lev 23:27), and for the seven days of the autumn pilgrimage festival and the sacred gathering of the eighth day (Lev 23:36–37). Taking these cues, the author of Numbers 28–29 introduced the comprehensive stipulations of Numbers 28–29 by stating: *zeh hāʾiššeh ʾašer taqrîbû le-YHWH* "This is the offering by fire that you must present to YHWH." What Leviticus 23 had formulated as a general rule, establishing the essential requirement of offerings by fire in the public cult, Numbers 28–29 spell out in detail, specifying which burnt offering is to be brought on each occasion. Numbers 28–29 also ordain certain public rites about which Leviticus 23 says nothing, such as the requirement of an *ʾiššeh* as the daily *tāmîd*, or for the Sabbaths and New Moons of the year. We cannot say, therefore, that the role of serving as a complement to Leviticus fully accounts for the content of Numbers 28–29.

It must also be emphasized that in complementing Leviticus 23, Numbers

28–29 do not necessarily endorse all of the previously prescribed legislation. Nor does the present ritual code perceive of and define in the same way the specific sacred occasions legislated by the former code. A classic example, analyzed by Ginsberg (1982:72–83), has to do with the "sabbatarian" emphasis in Leviticus 23:9–22, that lends definition to the seven-week period between the *maṣṣôt* festival and the festival of first fruits (see Notes to Num 28:26). Enhancement of the symbolism of the weekly Sabbath so that it serves as the paradigm for marking units of time—weeks, years and even septads—is a distinctive feature of the Holiness Code. Whereas Deuteronomy 16:9–10 speak of *šābūʿōt* "weeks" in introducing the seven-week deferral of the wheat harvest festival, and accordingly name that occasion *ḥag šābūʿōt* "a pilgrimage festival of weeks," Leviticus 23 speaks of seven *šabbātôt*, namely, weeks ending on the Sabbath Day. Leviticus 23 stops short of calling the deferred festival *šabbātôt*, which would have been its logical name for this occasion.

We can thus trace a sequence from Deuteronomy 16, through Leviticus 23, to Numbers 28, as follows: (1) Deuteronomy 16 defers the spring harvest festival seven weeks, counted from "day one," on whichever day of the week that initial day happened to occur; (2) Leviticus 23 accepts the Deuteronomic deferral, but does not count from day-to-day, but from a Sunday declared to be "day one." The period of deferral covers a span of seven sabbatical weeks (namely, weeks that end on the Sabbath Day), and concludes on the day after the seventh Sabbath, a Sunday; and (3) Numbers 28 retains the same deferral, but reverts to day-to-day weeks (*šābūʿōt*) as the relevant unit of time, not to sabbatical weeks (*šabbātôt*). In effect, later priestly tradition, represented by Numbers 28–29, largely abandoned the sabbatarian emphasis so characteristic of the Holiness Code in Leviticus 23; not in all respects, but surely as regards the scheduling of the spring harvest festival.

Underlying the textual linkage of Leviticus 23 to Numbers 28–29, and the reversals evident in the latter, is a process of institutional development involving, among other things, a redefinition of the festivals themselves. For example, Deuteronomy 16 classifies the Pentecost as a *ḥag*, while neither Leviticus 23 nor Numbers 28–29 follow suit. This indicates that the evident differences in content and specification between Leviticus 23 and Numbers 28–29 cannot all be explained by textual analysis, or by merely assuming different codifying functions for the respective documents. These differences reflect genuine changes in the way the festivals were observed.

COMMENT 2:
THE TWO-PHASED *TĀMÎD* IN TEXT-HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

A pattern of daily public worship extended throughout the ancient Near East, from Egypt to Hatti, and throughout Syria-Mesopotamia. The specific terminology of the biblical texts finds its closest parallels in Syro-Mesopotamian temple records, including those from Ugarit. This is true not only of the *tāmîd,* but of other components of public worship, as will be further noted in these Comments. Beginning at least as early as the Neo-Sumerian Period of the early second millennium B.C.E., and continuing through Late Babylonian times into the Persian and even the Seleucid periods, regular sacrificial offerings were known in Sumerian as gi.na, a term borrowed into Akkadian as *gīnu* "regular offering" (CAD G:80–82). A synonym of *gīnu* in the ancient lexical lists, and a term of wide use in Syro-Mesopotamian temple records, is Akkadian *sattukku,* Sumerian sá.dug$_4$ "food allowance, regular offering" (CAD S:198–202 s.v. *sattukku*). In temple records of the Ur III Period we often find entries listing quantities of grain, flour and other commodities, designated for specific offerings and scheduled for presentation at particular locations within the temple complex. Often the final item of information to be registered in such temple records will be the regularity of the allocation, its designation as šu.gi.na (see Levine-Hallo 1967:57, under šu.gi.na). In Mesopotamian temple records, we also encounter such designations as *ūmišam ana dariāti* "daily, for all generations," paralleling Hebrew *tāmîd ledōrōtêkem* "a regular offering, unto your generations" (Exod 29:42).

Akkadian *gīnu* and Hebrew *tāmîd,* are, therefore, functional equivalents, so that by studying usage of the Syro-Mesopotamian terminology we gain insight into temple administration in biblical Israel as well. Perhaps the first of these insights is that in the case of *tāmîd* we observe how administrative terminology was appropriated by temple scribes in registering the allocation of matériel to temple agencies for use in the cult (see Notes to Num 28:3). In other words, the term *tāmîd* informs us, in the first instance, that materials were allocated for sacrifice on a daily or regular basis; to put it another way, that the Israelites were commanded to provide such materials regularly. This is how the term *tāmîd* ultimately came to define a sequence of sacrificial rites.

The importance of regularity and continuity in worship is self-evident. The daily pattern is at least implied in the prophetic taunt, aimed at the people of Israel: "To be sure, they seek me daily. . . . They are eager for the nearness of God" (Isa 58:2–3). Clearer indications of the daily structure of worship appear in the Psalms (61:9, 68:20, 88:10, 145:2), where we read of blessing God every day, of regularly fulfilling vows, and the like. And yet, explicit evidence of a daily public cult is rare in biblical literature before the Exile, if we initially exclude references in Torah literature from consideration. Although Torah sources provide most of the information about public worship in biblical times, we are at a loss to determine their historical context, since such legal texts are not bracketed by historical indicators but only by a traditional chronology recording their revelation and transmission to the Israelites. What, then, is our earliest evidence for the pattern of daily public sacrifices in biblical

Israel outside of Torah legislation, by whatever terms this pattern was known? More specifically, when did the *tāmîd* become a two-phased, daily rite? As a corollary, we must investigate the history of the priestly grain offering, ordained in Leviticus 6:12–16, since it likewise exhibits a two-phased structure.

Most scholars of biblical religion have noted that while the Books of Kings know of a daily public cult, they know of only one daily burnt offering (ʿōlāh) brought in the morning. Thus, we are told that Ahaz, who reigned over Judah in the third quarter of the eighth century B.C.E., once issued instructions that "the burnt offering of the morning" (*ʿōlat habbōqer*) be placed on the great altar of the Jerusalem Temple, along with "the grain offering of the evening" (*minḥat hāʿereb*; 2 Kings 16:15). This was apparently the pattern in preexilic times, so that one would refer to the late afternoon or early evening as the time of the grain offering. Thus, 1 Kings 18:29: "When noon passed they (= the Baal prophets) kept prophesying until [the hour of] the ascent of the grain offering" (*ʿad laʿalôt hamminḥāh*; cf. 1 Kings 18:36). What is more, Ezekiel 46 knows of only one daily *ʿōlāh* offered as the *tāmîd*, and it was sacrificed in the morning:

> You shall offer a yearling lamb without blemish each day, as a daily burnt offering (*ʿōlāh layyôm*) to YHWH; each morning shall you perform it. And a grain offering shall you perform to accompany it each morning, [consisting of] one-sixth of an *ephah*, and one-third of a *hin* of oil to moisten the semolina flour, as a grain offering to YHWH; statutes for all time, on a regular basis (*tāmîd*). Let them perform the lamb and the grain offering and the oil each morning; it is a regular burnt offering (*ʿōlat tāmîd*; Ezek 46:13–15).

Ezekiel 46 is the only chapter in all of Ezekiel 40–48 that speaks of daily sacrifices specifically and designates them by the term *tāmîd* (a term known, however, to the author of Ezekiel 39:14 who uses it in another context). Furthermore, Ezekiel 45–46 together account for most of the specifications of cultic practice preserved anywhere in Ezekiel 40–48. And yet, Ezekiel 46 speaks of only one burnt offering, sacrificed in the morning. Although Ezekiel 45–46 hardly constitute a complete legislative corpus, they list many types of diverse sacrifices, and convey the unmistakable impression that no regular evening *ʿōlāh* was operative at the time.

Now, to which period in Israelite-Jewish history are Ezekiel 40–48 to be assigned? Without entering into the debate over the relation of Ezekiel 40–48 to the rest of the canonical Book of Ezekiel, or even examining the question of whether all of Ezekiel 40–48 derives from the same source, we can say with confidence that Ezekiel 45–46 were written after the Babylonian Exile began, and most likely postdate its inception considerably. There is, therefore, strong reason to conclude that before the destruction of the First Temple of Jerusalem the provisions of Numbers 28:3–8, and of Exodus 29:38–42, governing the two-phased *tāmîd* were not yet in force.

We have already observed in Notes to Numbers 28:8 that the priestly grain offering prescribed in Leviticus 6:12–16 parallels in its structure the two-phased *ʿōlāh tāmîd.* That passage appears to interrupt the continuity of Leviticus 6, which has suggested to many scholars that it is, in fact, a later interpolation. In its disposition, that daily grain offering, also a holocaust, was divided into two phases, with one-half of it to be offered in the morning and the other half in the evening. We observe, therefore, a counterpart in the public cult to the daily burnt offering brought on behalf of the entire people of Israel, namely, the grain offering brought on behalf of the priesthood. Structurally, the two rites are similar, so that determining their historical position should logically be governed by the same criteria.

It is only in postexilic literature that we find a clear statement to the effect that the daily *tāmîd* consisted of two parts, one offered in the morning and the other in the evening. 1 Chronicles 16 represents a later version of 2 Samuel 6, the narrative of the installation of the Ark in Jerusalem by King David. In the earlier account, David is said to have offered sacred meals (*zebāḥîm*) of fattened bulls, together with burnt offerings and sacred gifts of greeting in celebration of the occasion (2 Sam 6:13, 17–18), whereas in 1 Chronicles 16:40, we read that David ordered Zadok, the priest, "to offer up burnt offerings to YHWH on the altar of burnt offerings, regularly, each morning and evening" (*tāmîd labbōqer welāʿereb*). The provisions of Numbers 28–29 (and of Lev 6:12–16) represent, therefore, a later stratum of priestly legislation that is represented by Leviticus 23, in its original form. Essentially, Numbers 28–29 describe the daily public cult of the restored Temple of Jerusalem, the cult ultimately reflected in Chronicles.

In the Introduction to Numbers 28–29, and in Notes to Numbers 28:3–8 reference was made to the provisions of Exodus 29:38–42 that also call for a two-phased *tāmîd.* It is now time to clarify the textual relationship between Numbers 28:3–8 and Exodus 29:38–42. In an earlier study (Levine 1965a), it was argued that Exodus 29:1–37, the rites of installing the Aaronide priests, appear to anticipate much of what is prescribed in Leviticus 8, but in reality constitute a response to Leviticus 8, which is actually the primary report of that event. It was hypothesized that Exodus 29:1–37 were introduced into the record of the building of the Tabernacle (Exodus 25–31) so as to lay a foundation for Leviticus 8 by providing a prior commandment that could later be fulfilled in Leviticus 8. In a parallel way, we now suggest that Exodus 29:38–42 were introduced so as to provide a basis for Numbers 28:3–8, where the two-phased *tāmîd* is legislated.

The priestly redactors of Exodus took pains to lay a foundation for the operative Tabernacle cult within their record of the Sinaitic revelation. In addition to providing a precedent for the installation of the Aaronide priests, the editors of Exodus also established the basis for the two-phased *tāmîd* legislated in Numbers 28:3–8 by specifying that it had originally been ordained for the Tabernacle altar. In this vein, Exodus 29:38 begins by referring to what was to be offered on the altar whose construction had been prescribed in Exodus 27:1–9: *wezeh ʾašer taʿaśeh ʿal hammizbēaḥ* "And this is what you shall perform on the altar," namely, on the very same altar of burnt offerings. Once Exodus 29:38–42 were in place, it became possible to refer to this presumably earlier commandment in the legislation of Numbers 28, thereby completing the circle. As a result of this redactional activity, we emerge with the two-phased *tāmîd*, a rite nowhere mentioned in Leviticus, but represented as part of the initial structure of the public cult that was ordained as Sinai.

There is meaning to the timing of sacrificial rites at various hours during the day just as there is meaning to their scheduling on special days of the month. In ancient Near Eastern temples, the main cultic event normally occurred in the morning, or at least began at that time. In the first instance, kings and societies, and citizens of cities celebrated the dawn of a new day. One assumes that solar worship played a primary role in the structuring of ancient cults. We know that the notion of the day as a unit of time referred primarily to the daylight hours, to the period when people went about their work and when the business of a society was conducted (Robbins 1989). Thus, Psalm 104:22–23: "When the sun shines, they (= the beasts of the night) are withdrawn . . . The human being [then] sets out to his job; to his labor until evening."

Just as the new day was celebrated at its inception, so was its completion marked by sacrificial rites, usually less elaborate. Comparative evidence attests the same general pattern in ancient Near Eastern cultures, generally. In Ugaritic temple rituals, we find indicators of various times during the day when offerings were brought. Thus, *KTU*$_2$ 1.41, the largest Ugaritic temple ritual yet to be uncovered, records an elaborate regimen of sacrifices for scheduled days of the month. After listing the offerings that begin the day, it adds a further list of sacrifices, prefixed by the indicator: *w b urm* "and at midday," literally, at the time of bright light, a designation similar in meaning to Hebrew *ṣohorayim* "midday." (Levine and de Tarragon 1993:95). In other Ugaritic rituals, we find further time indicators, such as *l pn ll* "before evening/nightfall," and *w l ll* "at evening/nightfall." These terms correspond with those used in Neo-Sumerian temple records, where times for sacrifices are occasionally indicated. Thus, we find mention of offerings designated: á u$_4$.te.na "at the time of the evening breeze," translated by Akkadian *ina liliātim* "in the evening/at night" (CAD L:184, s.v. *lelātu*; Levine-Hallo 1967:51). In addition to marking the conclusion of the day, rites that are performed as night approaches, or during the night, often express penitential moods, or relate to magical activity.

What we observe in a number of sources—among them Numbers 28:3–8, Exodus 29:38–42, Leviticus 5:12–16, and 1 Chronicles 16:40—is the enhancement of public rites scheduled for late afternoon or evening by the addition of the *ʿōlāh* to their regimen. Along with representing the end result of a process of codification and institutional development, the *tāmîd* regimen, as well as the other composite rites of Numbers 28–29, attest to the ascendance of the burnt offering in biblical religion. Biblical literature reveals a development in modes of sacrificing, indicating that burnt offerings did not always enjoy the prominence attributed to them in Numbers 28–29, or in priestly legislation, generally. Although ceremonies of feeding the statues of gods are known in the ancient Near East, the pervasive mode of sacrificing was presentation. Offerings were placed before the deity, or deities, on a platform or table. The divine recipient is portrayed as receiving the offerings by viewing them not by consuming them in the usual manner. Normally, such offerings were eaten by priests and other officiants after their initial presentation to deities. In such presentation rites the role of an altar, if one was used, was not for burning any part of the sacrifice itself. There are examples of the presentational mode in Torah legislation, and in other bibilical sources, narrative and poetic. It is even possible to trace a development from the presentational mode to that of the burnt offering in the case of given types of sacrifice, especially grain offerings and other nonanimal sacrifices.

Since we have been speaking of the relationship between Leviticus 23 and Numbers 28–29, it might be instructive to start with an example taken from Leviticus 23 itself. In the laws governing the period between the celebrations in the spring of the year, namely, between the Paschal sacrifice and *maṣṣôt* festival and the festival of the first fruits scheduled seven weeks later, we encounter a regimen of presentations executed without recourse to the altar of burnt offerings. A sheaf or armful of new grain is raised (the Hebrew verb *hēnîp*) as a presentation to YHWH (Lev 23:11), and fifty days later, a grain offering from the new crop, in the form of leavened baked goods, is likewise raised as a presentation, again without the use of the altar fire (Lev 23:15–17, 21–22). In this form of offering, known as *tenûpāh* "raised, elevated offering" (Num 6:20, 8:11, 13), the sacrifice was displayed before the deity for his approval (Levine 1989b:158, s.v. Lev 23:11). In Leviticus 23, we observe the consequences of the adaptation of these offerings in a redactional form. It is probable that a later author or redactor interpolated Leviticus 23:12–13 so that the raising of the sheaf would be accompanied by burnt altar offerings, and further on, interpolated Leviticus 23:18–20 so that the ultimate presentation of the first fruits on the festival would likewise be accompanied not only by burnt offerings, but also by the *šelāmîm* sacrifice and the sin-offering. The redactional process may be charted as follows:

a) Primary text:

> When you enter the land that I am giving to you and reap its harvest, you shall bring the first sheaf of your harvest to the priest. He shall elevate the sheaf before YHWH; for acceptance on your behalf shall the priest elevate *it on the day after the Sabbath* (Lev 23:10–11).

Secondary text:

> On the day that you elevate the sheaf, you shall offer as a burnt offering to YHWH a yearling lamb without blemish. The grain offering with it shall be two-tenths [of an *ephah*] of semolina flour with oil mixed in, an offering by fire of pleasing aroma to YHWH; and the libation with it shall be of wine, one-quarter of a *hin* (Lev 23:12–13).

b) Primary text:

> You shall bring from your settlements two loaves of bread as an elevation offering; each shall be made of two-tenths [of an *ephah*] of semolina flour, of leavened dough, as first fruits to YHWH (Lev 23:17).

Secondary text:

> With the bread you shall present, as burnt offerings to YHWH, seven yearling lambs without blemish, one bull of the herd, and two rams with their grain offerings and libations, an offering by fire of pleasing aroma to YHWH. You shall also offer one he-goat as a sin-offering, and two yearling lambs as sacred gifts of greeting. The priest shall elevate them—the two lambs—together with the bread of first fruits as an elevation offering to YHWH (Lev 23:18–20).

A close examination of what we have labeled "primary" and "secondary" texts shows the very development in the mode of sacrificing of which we have been speaking. In the first instance, the elevation of a sheaf of new grain was enhanced by an *ʿōlāh*, accompanied by a grain offering and libation. In the second instance, in celebrating the festival of first fruits itself, the adaptation was two-directional: First, animal sacrifices offered as *ʿōlāh* were added, with their appropriate grain offerings and libations, as well as a he-goat as a sin-offering. Then, two lambs were added as an exceptional instance of the inclusion of sacred gifts of greeting (*šelāmîm*) in the public cult. Finally, the two unleavened loaves were again raised for YHWH's view, this time together with the two lambs offered as *šelāmîm*. The overall effect was to adapt an originally presentational offering to the mode of burnt offerings. At the same time, an offering of the *zebaḥ* type, in this instance the *šelāmîm*, was elevated for YHWH's view prior to its usual disposition. Normally, the parts of the *zebaḥ* were cooked directly, while other parts of the animal were burned on the altar.

The secondary interpolations in Leviticus 23 represent a late phase of priestly legislation, similar in some respects to what we encounter in Numbers 28–29. We note the inclusion in the interpolations not only of accompanying grain offerings, but of libations, as well, so that the full composite regimen of the public cult is ordained. There are additional indications of the adaptation of presentational offerings, and even instances of purely presentational offerings, that remained in this mode. A case in point is the offering of first fruits ordained in Deuteronomy 26:1–11, where the Israelites are instructed to place the first fruits in a basket and set them down (the verb *hēnîaḥ*) in front of the altar of YHWH. No part of the offering was to be placed on the altar, or put to the flame.

From Deuteronomy 26 to Numbers 28–29 is a long distance, phenomenologically speaking. In the disposition of burnt offerings the deity is perceived as breathing in the aromatic smoke of the sacrifice as it rises heavenward, and experiencing pleasure thereby. The act of consumption is realized as inhalation, so that the food of the sacrifice was to be reduced to a rarefied, almost insubstantial, form before it reached the deity. Virtually as much is stated in the Yahwist's version of the flood story:

> Noah built an altar to YHWH, taking of every pure animal and of every pure bird, and he offered up burnt offerings (*ʿōlōt*) on the altar. YHWH breathed in the pleasing aroma, and YHWH said to himself: "Never again will I condemn the earth on account of humans." (Gen 8:20–21).

A possible etiology of the burnt altar offering is provided by a narrative in Judges 13. Manoah and his unnamed wife, soon to become the parents of Samson, were visited by an angel of YHWH. They wished to offer him an hospitable meal, only to be told, while still unaware of his divinity, to make of the meal a burnt offering to YHWH:

> So, Manoah took the kid goat and the grain offering and offered [them] up on the rock to YHWH . . . And it happened that as the flame rose heavenward from atop the altar the angel of YHWH ascended in the altar flame (Judg 13:19–20).

The Hebrew Bible thus documents, albeit cryptically, the rising importance of the burnt offering as a mode of sacrifice. This is not to say that, in and of itself, the burnt offering represents an innovation in ancient Near Eastern religions. It is attested at Ugarit, and much earlier at Ebla, and was utilized by Minoans and Hittites. The character and provenance of the burnt offering as a distinctive mode of sacrifice in ancient Near Eastern religions are subjects requiring further investigation if we are to formulate a unified theory of Israelite sacrifice.

COMMENT 3: THE SABBATH

As ordained in Numbers 28:9–10, the celebration of the Sabbath in the public cult involved sacrificing two yearling lambs without blemish, with their accompanying grain offerings and libations, all in addition to the daily *tāmîd.* In fact, the Sabbath sacrifice and the two-phased *tāmîd* are identical in their total content, although they were offered according to different schedules. The Sabbath sacrifice was completed in the morning, there being no indication that it was realized in more than one phase.

It has already been noted that this is the sole statement in the Torah that ordains public sacrifice on the Sabbath Day. In Leviticus 23:2–3, where the observance of the Sabbath is unexpectedly listed as one of the set times of the religious calendar, there is no mention of offering an *ʾiššeh* "offering by fire," as there is in the subsequent statements governing annual occasions in Leviticus 23:8, 11, 17, 25, 27, 35. The same omission is noticeable in Exodus 31:12–17, 35:1–3, and in both versions of the Decalogue (Exod 20:8–11//Deut 5:12–16). In Exodus 23:12, a brief statement on the Sabbath, the Book of the Covenant fails to allude to the requirement of sacrifice as it indeed does when speaking of the three annual pilgrimages. On such pilgrimages, Israelites are admonished not to appear before YHWH empty-handed, which is a way of saying that sacrificial gifts were required (Exod 23:15–16).

In contrast, early biblical sources outside of Torah literature seem to indicate that the Sabbath was an occasion for public celebration and sacrifice. This is in addition to its being a day of rest for families at home, and for Israelite communities in their settlements; a day when all assigned tasks were to cease. An allusion to the custom of visiting cult sites on Sabbaths and New Moons is to be found in 2 Kings 4:23. There we read that a husband questioned his wife about her intention to visit a man of God at a cult site on a certain day, wondering why she would do so on other than a Sabbath or New Moon! The impression conveyed in the dire prophecy of First Hosea, dated by Ginsberg (1960) to the ninth century B.C.E., is one of public celebration of the Sabbath: "And I will end all her rejoicing; her pilgrimage festivals, New Moons and

Sabbaths, and all her set times" (Hos 2:13). The same atmosphere informs Isaiah's denunciation of Jerusalemite religiosity, late in the eighth century B.C.E.

> When you make an appearance before me—
> Who asked such from your hand?
> Trample my courts no more!
> Bringing grain offerings is futile;
> Incense is an abomination to me!
> New Moon and Sabbath,
> The proclamation of a convocation,
> Fast day and sacred assembly—
> I cannot abide. (Isa 1:12–13)

In referring to the Sabbath, Isaiah is clearly depicting it as a temple celebration, which is what appearing before God means, and also what proclaiming a convocation means. Although Amos (8:5), who refers to the Sabbath and the New Moons in the same breath, speaks primarily of the cessation of commerce on these occasions, he at least implies the public character of the Sabbath. In determining the position of Numbers 28:9–10 in the development of Torah legislation on the Sabbath and festivals, we encounter, therefore, a somewhat puzzling situation: The present statement of ritual law is unusually brief and limited in its characterization of a major feature of Israelite religious life. Whereas the Sabbath is designated *miqrāʾ qōdeš* in Leviticus 23:3, it is not so designated here. In Notes to Numbers 28:18, it was explained that *miqrāʾ qōdeš* is best translated "sanctuary convocation," since it was an event designed to bring local residents to the Sanctuary. Are we to suppose that later priestly legislators diminished the public aspect of the Sabbath by canceling the communal gatherings at the Sanctuary that were part of its celebration at an earlier time? This conclusion would be unwarranted, and there is little real evidence of a diminution in the scope of Sabbath observance, though we are left with the problem of fully explaining why Numbers 28:9–10 say so little about the communal importance of the Sabbath.

As far as we know, the Sabbath is an original Israelite institution. The identification of the biblical Sabbath with Mesopotamian *šapattu,* an occasion usually occurring on the fifteenth day of the month, in time with the phases of the moon, is questionable (*CAD* Š I:449–450). Apart from sounding similar, the two terms apparently do not share a common etymology. As has been emphasized most recently by Hallo (1977), the biblical Sabbath is unrelated to the lunar calendar; in fact, it contrasts with it. The Sabbath became the basis for the delimitation of time by units of uninterrupted weeks, ending on the Sabbath Day, rather than by months, which was the pattern both in biblical and in ancient Near Eastern societies. Consequently, the Sabbath is best regarded as an innovation within Israelite religion, itself, first attested in the Book of the Covenant (Exod 23:12), and in early prophecy. This textual evidence carries us back to the ninth century B.C.E., or possibly earlier.

Comment here has been largely restricted to the interpretation of Numbers 28:9–10. The reader will find further discussion of the themes of the Sabbath and of its overall significance in Levine 1989b:154–155, 232–233, 261–262, as part of a comprehensive interpretation of Leviticus 23.

COMMENT 4: THE NEW MOON

This is the first statement in the Torah legislating public sacrifice on the New Moon, although there is ample biblical evidence to show that the New Moon was an important occasion in the biblical period (cf. Num 10:10). In the course of time, its significance and method of celebration underwent change. Numbers 28–29 show concern only for the public aspect of this occasion, and yet fail to give it the status of *miqrāʾ qōdeš* "sanctuary convocation," a status held by the festivals, thereby indicating that, in their system, there was no requirement for the community to congregate at the Sanctuary on New Moons. And yet, earlier biblical sources emphasize the public celebration of the New Moon (Isa 1:13, Hosea 2:13, Amos 8:5), while emphasizng as well its importance as a family celebration, when all members of the family or clan were expected to attend a feast (1 Sam 20:5, 18). In Notes to Numbers 28:11–15, ancient Near Eastern cognates of the Hebrew terminology used to designate the New Moon were cited. The month was, after all, the basic unit of measuring time throughout the ancient Near East. Lunar cults, such as those of the Mesopotamian god Sin, and of the Ugaritic god Yariḫ and his wife, the goddess Nikkal, were widespread and persistent. A general but detailed overview of the evidence in comparative perspective is now provided by Rochberg-Halton (1992, in *ABD* I:810–814), and for Israelite-Jewish practice by Vanderkam (1992, in *ABD* I:814–820).

Biblical Hebrew attests two terms for month: *yeraḥ*, deriving from *yārēaḥ* "moon" (1 Kings 6:37–38, 8:2, Zech 11:8), and *ḥōdeš*, from adjectival *ḥādāš* "new," referring to the birth of the moon. There is also evidence for more than one operative calendar in ancient Israel, as indicated by epigraphic evidence. The early Gezer calendar, usually dated to the tenth century B.C.E., designates the month by the term *yeraḥ* and reckons the beginning of the year in the autumn (Ginsberg 1982:49, note 63, and see further below).

Numbers 28–29 reflect a system that calculates the year from a vernal inception, so that the first month occurs in the spring, and the autumn festival and holy days are assigned to the seventh month (cf. Exod 12:2). The reader is directed to the incisive discussion by Ginsberg of what he calls "Later Holy Day Calendars," where he explains the system common to Leviticus 23, Numbers 28–29, and Ezekiel 45:18–25 (Ginsberg 1982:67–83). Ginsberg dates the introduction of the system of ordinally numbered months, commencing in the spring of the year, to the period preceding the Babylonian Exile, as evidenced by Hebrew epigraphy of that period, such as the Lachish Ostraca. This period is indicated by the first attestations of this system, outside of the Torah, in 2 Kings 25:1, 8, 25, 27, Jer 36:9, 22, and frequently in Ezekiel. The adoption of this system in biblical records is probably to be traced to Assyrian influence, effective during the latter part of Manasseh's reign, in the mid-to-late seventh century B.C.E. It continued to be used in the postexilic period. These considerations will again command our attention further on, in discussing the development of the annual festivals.

The regimen of sacrifices for the New Moon has already been outlined in the Notes. It is for the rites of the New Moon that the sin-offering (*ḥaṭṭāʾt*) is first introduced into the calendar of public rites, where it remains as a regular component of public sacrifice. The particular variety of *ḥaṭṭaʾt* referred to here has been identified as the sin-offering of the people, a sacrifice to be distinguished from the priestly sin-offering, a form of which was ordained in Leviticus 16 for Yom Kippurim. It remains for us to explain, if we can, why the he-goat (*śāʿîr*) was so appropriate for sin-offerings, and more specifically, why this type of *ḥaṭṭāʾt* was offered periodically, in preparation for important public celebrations. Ezekiel 45:21–25 also refer to sin-offerings as part of festival celebrations, with more than one type of *ḥaṭṭāʾt* being legislated. According to Nehemiah 10:34, the restored Judeans pledged to provide funds for a variety of temple needs, including "for sin-offerings (*ḥaṭṭāʾôt*), for performing rites of expiation over Israel."

Based on a review of the utilization of the *ḥaṭṭāʾt* of the people in public celebrations it would seem that this sacrifice, essentially a gift to the priesthood for its services on behalf of the Israelites, served to ensure that the people remained on good terms with their God. It was not designed to accomplish the actual purification of the Sanctuary, a result that would have required the complex riddance rites of the priestly *ḥaṭṭāʾt*. The *ḥaṭṭāʾt* of the people merely expiated inadvertent offenses that might have encumbered the human-divine relationship, thereby detracting from the efficacy of the celebrations. God would not have been amenable to answering the call of a people whose offenses had not been expiated. As indicated in Leviticus 10:16–20, the consumption of the *ḥaṭṭāʾt* by the priests in sacred precincts was essential to the fulfillment of their office and to the efficacy of the Tabernacle dedication (Levine 1989b:62–63). Just as this sacrifice had been indispensable at the original installation of the Aaronide priesthood, when the Tabernacle cult was initiated (Leviticus 9), so was it to be part of the preparation for all special Sanctuary celebrations henceforth (Levine 1974:112–114). In a word, the sin-offering of the people squared the people with their God, whereas what we are calling the priestly sin-offering, a rite of greater severity, purified the Sanctuary.

The appropriateness of he-goats for the *ḥaṭṭāʾt* of the people can be explained phenomenologically. The *śāʿîr* symbolized the wilderness (Isa 13:21), "a land cut off" (*ʾereṣ gezērāh*), in the words of the scapegoat ritual (Lev 16:22). In dispatching the scapegoat, laden with the sins of the people, to the wilderness, the High Priest was, in effect, returning sins to their place of origin. From Leviticus 17:7, we learn that Israelites had once propitiated such goat deities, so as to be protected from the evil they brought about. It is not difficult to understand how the *śāʿîr* became the animal most appropriate for the sin-offerings of the people. The embodiment of sinfulness became the very instrumentality of its expiation (Levine 1989b:250–253).

COMMENT 5:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ANNUAL FESTIVALS AND THE SACRED DAYS OF THE YEAR

Certain changes in the scheduling and observance of the annual festivals, as reflected in Numbers 28–29, have already been noted as these chapters have been compared with Leviticus 23, which represents an earlier, priestly calendar (see above, in Comment 1). The most important, recent discussion of the development of festival legislation in the Torah sources is by Ginsberg (1982:55–83). Ginsberg's analysis was adopted in its principal aspects in the *JPS Torah Commentary, Leviticus*, where a detailed reconstruction of festival legislation was presented (Levine 1989b:263–268). Here, comment will focus on the place of Numbers 28–29 in the scheme of ongoing Torah legislation. The reconstruction presented in the *JPS Torah Commentary, Leviticus*, must be modified in some important respects, based on a reassessment of some of Ginsberg's conclusions and upon further consideration of the biblical evidence itself. For the sake of clarity, a table of information on Torah legislation of the biblical festivals will be attached to the present comments as Figure 1.

We begin by stating Ginsberg's view, a view supported by the evidence, that priestly festival legislation in the Torah is predicated on the Deuteronomic reform of the cult restricting the locus of legitimate sacrifice to a central temple. More precisely, it is necessary to trace the effect of Deuteronomic festival legislation on priestly law and ritual as these are represented in Leviticus 23 and in Numbers 28–29. The point should be made that the intricacies of Leviticus 23 hold the key to an understanding of Numbers 28–29, making it necessary to devote considerable attention to that earlier calendar of festivals in the present discussion.

The earliest festival legislation in Torah literature is preserved in Exodus 12:21–27, 13:1–10, covering the Paschal sacrifice and the *maṣṣôt* festival, and in Exodus 23:15–19, a passage from the Book of the Covenant. Exodus 23:15–19, embodying two formulations of religious law, speak of three *regālîm*, an ancient word for "pilgrimage," and these three annual festivals are further designated as *ḥag* "pilgrimage festival." We should bear in mind that each of the three actual pilgrimages lasted one day, even in the case of the *maṣṣôt* festival. It is only the requirement to eat unleavened bread that lasted seven days. In early biblical times, pilgrimages brought large numbers of Israelites to local and regional cult sites, and only less frequently to national temples, in Jerusalem and in such northern sites as Bethel. This pattern was invalidated by the legislation of Deuteronomy 12–16, implemented in the edict of Josiah, issued ca. 622 B.C.E. (2 Kings 22–23). Henceforth, the proper observance of a *ḥag* "pilgrimage festival" would most often require extended travel, because it could only take place at the chosen, central temple, historically the Temple of Jerusalem. Whether or not most Israelites actually undertook all of the commanded pilgrimages and obediently abandoned their former cult sites, it is a principle of law that duties are not to be imposed that cannot be practically fulfilled. To encourage compliance with the new doctrine of a unique altar and a central temple, both the schedule and the character of the annual festivals had, therefore, to be accommodated in significant ways.

Before considering these changes, it is necessary to say more about the calendars upon which the various festival schedules were predicated. The priestly tradition, including Numbers 28–29, followed a calendar year beginning in the spring, so that the autumn celebrations are said to occur in the seventh month, and the *maṣṣôt* festival in the first month. This is usually referred to as the vernal inception, in contrast to the autumnal inception, according to which the year begins in the autumn of the year. Furthermore, the months of the year are designated by ordinal numbers, a distinctive method of recording to be discussed further on. We lack information on such matters as intercalation of months during the preexilic period, but we assume that the authoritative agencies in preexilic Israel operated on the lunisolar calendar used thoughout most of ancient Near East, with the exception of Egypt.

It was insightful of Ginsberg to call attention to the Gezer Calendar, preserved in a Hebrew inscription discovered at that site, and usually dated to the third quarter of the tenth century B.C.E. for evidence of an autumnal inception of the year during the early monarchy. This calendar begins its listing of the units of the year, units of one and two months, with *yrḥw ʾsp* "its two months of ingathering," corresponding to Tishre–Heshvan, roughly September–October. The fact that this unit is listed first clearly indicates that the Gezer Calendar reckoned the year as beginning in the autumn, when the harvest of vineyards and orchards occurred. This unit of two months is followed by others, variously of one and two months' duration, covering the successive phases of planting and harvesting throughout the year. For the text of the Gezer Calendar in Hebrew, see Ahituv 1992:149–152, and for its translation see Rochberg-Vanderkam 1992; *ABD* I:817; Sivan (1998). It is worth mentioning that the Babylonian name *tašrītu*, cognate with Hebrew *tišrê*, means "beginning" (*AHw*:1340, s.v. *tašrītu*), and there is evidence of an *akītu* festival in the month of *Tašrītu*, so that one may assume a tradition of autumnal inception in Mesopotamia as well (J. Klein 1992, in *ABD* I:138–140).

The question of identifying the calendars operative in the various strata of Torah legislation on the festivals hinges on the definitions of several terms of reference. Exodus 23:16b, part of the Book of the Covenant, an early northern Israelite source, places the pilgrimage festival of ingathering (*ḥag hāʾāsîp*) in a time frame it calls *beṣēʾt haššañāh*. Ginsberg takes this to mean "at the outset of the year," based on usage of the verb *y-ṣ-ʾ*, said of the shining of the sun, its "departure" in the East (Ps 19:7). He consequently applies the Gezer Calendar to the interpretation of Exodus 23.

Although *môṣāʾ* "point of departure, the East" and *teqûpāh* "turn, circuit" are contrasted in Psalm 19:7 with reference to the sun's path through the heavens, as observed by Ginsberg, the verb *y-ṣ-ʾ* is ambiguous, and could just as well connote the passage of time, the expiration of a period of time. It is preferable, therefore, to understand *ṣēʾt haššānāh* as "the passage of the year," its end. It really doesn't make much difference, however, because both interpretations indicate an autumnal inception. And yet, if *ṣēʾt haššānāh* meant "the outset of the year," we would hardly expect the ingathering festival to be listed last, as it is in Exodus 23, but rather first! So, the pre-Deuteronomic festival legislation of Exodus 23 (and in Exodus 12–13) reflects an autumnal inception because it sets the autumn festival of ingathering at the end of the year (or at the beginning of the year, in Ginsberg's view).

Unfortunately, the festival schedule of Deuteronomy 16 does not specify in terms of months when the ingathering festival, now named *Sukkot* "huts," is to be celebrated. Nevertheless, Exodus 34:22, within a schedule of festivals affected by Deuteronomy (see further), uses another term, Hebrew *teqûpat haššānāh* "the turn of the year" in designating the time frame of the autumn harvest festival. This is the very term employed in Psalm 19:7 to describe the circuit of the year, in contrast to *môṣāʾ* "point of departure." A synonym is *tešûbat haššānāh* "the turn of the year" in 2 Samuel 11:1, 1 Kings 20:22, 26, the time in the spring when kings depart on military expeditions. Quite possibly, the terms *teqûpāh* and *tešûbāh* have been misunderstood as they apply to junctures in the year. They may not mean "end"–of the year, whether in the spring or in the autumn, but rather "turning point," namely, the furthest extent of the circuit, the midpoint of the year. Thus, Isaiah 29:1: "Add one year to the next, let pilgrimage festivals occur in their cycles" (*ḥaggîm yinqōpû*). Similarly, the sun is said to reach the furthest extent of the heavens before starting back to its point of departure in the east (cf. Eccl 1:5). So it is that the year, portrayed as encircling time, takes six months to reach its furthest extent and then begins its return. If the turn of the year is in the spring, the beginning of the year is in the fall, but if, as is meant in Exodus 34:22, the turn of the year is in the autumn, then the beginning of the year is in the spring. This means, in effect, that the schedule of Deuteronomy reflects a vernal inception, in the spring, and this is also true of Exodus 34:22, under the influence of Deuteronomic legislation. In conclusion, an analysis of terminology allows us to pinpoint a major change brought about by Deuteronomic legislation, namely, the switch from an autumnal to a vernal inception. The priestly festival legislation of the Torah follows suit, so that the first month comes in the spring, as we first read in Exodus 12:2, the opening statement of the *pesaḥ-maṣṣôt* law: "This month shall be for you the 'head' of months; it is for you the first of the months of the year."

What we find in statements of Torah law are some, or all of three items of information: (1) a name for each occasion; (2) an actual date, or a less precise seasonal indicator; and (3) a reference to what is being done at the time an occasion is scheduled, such as reaping or harvesting, or an explanation for the festival's observance. Some of the terms of reference employed in providing such information are elusive, however. It is particularly difficult to know in each case whether a designation was meant to indicate a precise date, or merely a time frame. One would expect exact dates to be given for festivals and other annual occasions, and yet it seems that, except for the priestly tradition, we are given only time frames, such as months and seasons, if that much at all.

In historical perspective, we should first review the pre-Deuteronomic legislation to establish what the law was at the time the author of Deuteronomy 16 sought to accommodate the scheduling of the three annual pilgrimage festivals to the restriction of pilgrimage and sacrifice to one central temple. Ginsberg makes a good case for tracing the Deuteronomic reform of the cult to northern Israel of the mid-to-late eighth century B.C.E. The doctrine of a unique altar and central temple was transmitted to Judah after the fall of the northern kingdom, a process that explains Hezekiah's attempt to implement this doctrine near the end of the eighth century B.C.E., probably without lasting effect (2 Kings 18:3–6, 22; Ginsberg 1982:19–24). Following Ginsberg, we may identify in the pre-Deuteronomic system the following festival calendar for the three pilgrimages of the year:

1) *Pesaḥ-maṣṣôt:*

Combining the evidence of Exodus 12:21–27, 13:1–10 and 23:14–19, we emerge with a seven-day *maṣṣôt* festival, beginning *beḥōdeš hā’ābîb* "in the month of soft-seeded grain ears," with the seventh and last day being designated as a *ḥag* (Exod 13:4–6). Ginsberg (1982:44, note 39) was of the view that *beḥōdeš hā’ābîb* in the statements of Exodus 13:4–5 and 23:15 meant "on the New Moon of soft-seeded grain ears." Indeed, the Hebrew *ḥōdeš* means "New Moon" in any number of early biblical sources (1 Sam 20:5, 18, 2 Kings 4:23, Isa 1:13, Ps 81:4). It was Ginsberg's understanding that Exodus 13:3, in stating the commandment "Remember this day" (*’et hayyôm hazzeh*), reflects an intent to register a precise date for the inception of the *pesaḥ-maṣṣôt* celebrations. And yet, it is doubtful that in the formula: *beḥōdeš ha-X* (= month), this would be the sense of the Hebrew *ḥōdeš*. After all, it is the entire month that is being identified by the state of growth of the barley ears, not a particular day! In analogous terminology, *beyeraḥ ha’ē̆tānîm beḥag* means "in the month of the perennial streams, on the pilgrimage festival" (1 Kings 8:2, and cf. 1 Kings 6:1, 38). Furthermore, it is likely that the other seasonal indicator in Exodus 23:15–16, the one that refers to the ingathering pilgrimage festival, is also imprecise. Thus, *beṣē’t haššānāh*, taken here to mean "at the passage of the year," is hardly a precise date; it is only a time frame. Even the Hebrew *mô‘ēd* "appointed time" does not necessarily designate a precise day, unless this is explicitly indicated. We are not, therefore, compelled to translate *lemô‘ēd ḥodeš hā’ābîb* in Exodus 23:15 and 34:18 as "at the appointed time of the New Moon of soft-seeded grain ears." This formula could just as well be rendered "at the appointed time of the *month* of soft-seeded grain ears," which is preferable.

When, then, did the *maṣṣôt* festival begin, according to Exodus 13:1–10 and the Book of the Covenant (Exodus 23)? It is likely that both the *maṣṣôt* and *’āsîp* pilgrimage festivals began at the middle of the month, at the full moon, as priestly legislation later fixed them. Ginsberg admits as much for the autumn ingathering festival, on the basis of Psalm 81, which he regards as an early Josephite, or northern Israelite composition. Psalm 81:4 reads: "Blow the horn on the New Moon (*baḥōdeš*), on the full moon (*bakkeseh*) for the day of our pilgrimage." Psalm 81 expresses thanksgiving and joyous celebration, and makes at least oblique references to the blessings of the harvest, to the richness of wheat and the sap of fig trees (Ps 81:17). Its perception of the pilgrimage at the full moon correlates with the later priestly calendar in which cultic celebration of the New Moon of the seventh month was enhanced. According to Leviticus 23:23–25 and Numbers 29:1–6, the Israelites were instructed to blow the shofar on that day to announce the pilgrimage festival of ingathering, which was to begin at the middle of the month. If the earliest festival calendar scheduled the pilgrimage of the ingathering festival at the middle of the month, one would only expect that the *maṣṣôt* festival would be similarly scheduled, as it was in practice. As a matter of fact, Psalm 81 twice recalls the Exodus (Ps 81:6, 11), and it may not be limited in its references to the autumn festival. Furthermore, the time of the full moon, at the middle of the month, was favored in the scheduling of festivals in those societies that operated on the lunisolar calendar. The pattern in Ugaritic temple rituals was for the most elaborate celebrations to be held on the fourteenth day of the month, known as *ym mlat* "the day of the full moon," a term synonymous with Hebrew *keseh* (Ps 81:4, Prov 7:20). In full months, this day was set on the fifteenth of the month at Ugarit (Levine-de Tarragon 1993).

The *maṣṣôt* festival was initiated by the Paschal sacrifice (*happesaḥ*), offered by Israelite families at home on the preceding evening, when a vigil began. Unleavened bread is to be eaten for seven days, with no leaven in sight. Ginsberg goes to great lengths to demonstrate that *pesaḥ* and *maṣṣôt* are commemorative celebrations, and not in any way associated with the spring harvest, which they actually precede. Here, the Gezer Calendar may be of some help. It lists two different months for reaping: (1) *yrḥ qṣr śʿrm* "the month of reaping the barley" (Gezer, line 4). Calculating from the beginning of the year, this month would correspond to what was later known as the month of *ʾIyyār*, roughly May; and (2) *yrḥ qṣr wkl* "the month of reaping [wheat] and measuring" (Gezer, line 5), corresponding to Sivan, roughly June, so that it refers to the month of the wheat harvest by implication.

Ginsberg (1982:44, note 60) carefully explains the Hebrew *ʾābîb* on the basis of Saadiah's Arabic rendering of this word as *farik*, "[what is easily] hulled by rubbing," namely, grain ears that are still quite soft. Mishnah, *Kilʾayim* 5:7 speaks of three stages in the growth of grains: (a) *ʿásābîm*, stalks with no ears on them, (b) *ʾābîb*, soft-seeded grain ears, and (c) *dāgān*, fully ripe cereal. Barley turns from green to yellow when the ears are fully ripe, and wheat from green to a shade almost white. So, by definition, the month of *ʾĀbîb* is the one in which barley had not yet fully ripened and was not ready for reaping. It is realistic to conclude that the biblical month of *ʾĀbîb* immediately preceded the Gezer Calendar's month of *yrḥ qṣr śʿrm* "the month of reaping the barley," and that it corresponds roughly to April. Exodus 9:31–32 tells us that when Egypt suffered the hail storm, only days before the Exodus, the flax and barley were struck down "because the barley was with soft-seeded ears" (*ʾābîb*), and the flax was in stalks. But the wheat and the emmer were not struck down, because they were [still] dark." This indicates that flax and barley were at a comparable stage of growth in the month of the Exodus, the month of *ʾĀbîb*, while wheat was not yet grown, or laden with pods at the time. So, one could suggest the following correlations: Gezer *yrḥ ʿṣd pšt* "its month of hoeing flax" = biblical *ḥōdeš hāʾābîb* "the month of the soft-seeded ears."

Ginsberg regarded the rites of the *pesaḥ-maṣṣôt* celebrations as expressing religious features of nomadic life, such as the Rajab feasts of pre-Islamic Arabia. He notes that Bedouin raise flocks, hence use of the lamb as a sacrificial animal; that they customarily sacrifice animals by roasting them whole, without breaking their bones and without recourse to an altar; and that they season their food with bitter herbs and smear blood from the sacrificial animal on the entrances to their tents and houses as an apotropaic rite. Most relevant is the fact that unleavened bread is a staple food of the Bedouin. Aside from these similarities, there is the typology of nomadism that gave rise to the epic of the Exodus and the wilderness migration. What the *pesaḥ-maṣṣôt* rites commemorated as an historic voyage, believed to have happened only once in Israelite experience, is to be understood as the dramatization of a nomadic way of life. Every spring, pastoral nomads migrate to new grazing lands, and this seasonal change served as the context for religious celebration.

2) *Qāṣîr:*

Exodus 23:16a ordains a pilgrimage festival, again most probably of one day's duration, "of the first fruits of your produce that you have sown in the field" (*bikkûrê maʿaśêkā ʾašer tizrāʿ baśśādeh*). These first fruits would be offered to YHWH at the pilgrimage site, thereby desacralizing the new crop. Before the new grain was used, a small part of it must be offered to God in thanksgiving. It was considered improper to have benefit of God's gifts before acknowledging his prior possession of them and his willingness, as it were, to grant to his people the yield of the earth. As the Psalmist put it: "The earth and its fullness belong to YHWH, the world and those who inhabit it" (Ps. 24:1). This expresses the phenomenology of desacralization. No date is given, but, as Ginsberg emphasizes, *ḥag haqqāṣîr* is to occur as soon as Israelites have begun to reap the first grain crop, barley, in the spring of the year. Assuming that *pesaḥ-maṣṣôt* occurred at the middle of the month of *ʿAbib*, it would be reasonable to assume that once the seven days of the *maṣṣôt* festival were over, and the *maṣṣôt* pilgrimage undertaken, an Israelite would look forward to a second pilgrimage as soon as the barley crop became ready for reaping. If there was a preference for pilgrimages at the full moon, the second pilgrimage might occur at the middle of *yrḥ qṣr śʿrm* "its month of reaping barley," otherwise known as *ʾIyyār*, about three weeks after the conclusion of the *maṣṣôt* festival.

3) *ʾAsip:*

Exodus 23:16b ordains a pilgrimage festival of ingathering to be celebrated "at the passage of the year (*beṣēʾt haššānāh*), when you gather in your produce from the field." We have already treated the matter of its date in the discussion of the first pilgrimage, having concluded that the autumn pilgrimage occurred at the full moon of the seventh month, also known as Tishre. As was true generally, this pilgrimage undoubtedly lasted one day, and the cultic offering brought on this occasion served to desacralize the yield of vineyards and orchards.

We may now examine how significantly Deuteronomic legislation altered the names, the schedule and even the character of the annual festivals. Most of what follows is based on Ginsberg's insightful analysis, with modifications.

1) *Pesaḥ-maṣṣôt:*

The switch from an autumnal to a vernal inception has already been noted. A direct consequence of the new system was that the Paschal sacrifice, the one instance of a domestic sacrifice offered by Israelite families near their homes (Exod 12:21–28), was made subject to the Deuteronomic requirement that all sacrifices be performed at a central temple (Deut 16:5–8). In the ancient practice, stated in Exodus 13:4–9, the pilgrimage occurred on the seventh day after the beginning of the festival of *maṣṣot.* To celebrate the *ḥag* on the seventh day under the new Deuteronomic law, an Israelite might have to remain at the central temple for more than seven days at the very time he was preparing for the barley harvest. To be precise, he would have to arrive at the central temple on the eve of the *maṣṣôt* festival in order to offer the Paschal sacrifice there on the fourteenth of the month, and if he could not make it back to his home and return by the seventh day, when the actual *ḥag* occurred, he would have to wait at the central temple during the interval.

To remedy this situation, Deuteronomy effectively combined the Paschal sacrifice with the festival sacrifice, and ordained that the *ḥag* was now to be celebrated on the first, not on the seventh day. Reflecting Deuteronomic legislation, what had been the Paschal sacrifice (*happesaḥ*) is renamed *zebaḥ ḥag happesaḥ* "the sacred feast of the Paschal pilgrimage" in Exodus 34:25. In fact, Deuteronomy 16:1–8 never mention a separate sacrifice in celebration of the *ḥag.* Deuteronomy 16:4 states that the Paschal sacrifice was to be offered after dark, *bā'ereb bayyôm hāri'šôn* "in the evening, on the first day [of the festival]," and, indeed, we had already been told in Deuteronomy 16:1 that the departure from Egypt had occurred at night! The Paschal sacrifice was moved into the same day as had now been scheduled for the festival offering. Furthermore, Deuteronomy 16:7 states that Israelites were to partake of the Paschal sacrifice in the central temple at night, and promptly set off on their return trip the next morning. On the seventh day they were to observe an *'aṣeret* "sacred assembly" back home in their settlements, and duly refrain from assigned tasks. This *'aṣeret* commemorated or symbolized the *ḥag* that had previously been celebrated on the seventh day. Note that, as a result of the restructuring of the sacrifices initiating this festival, we now read in Deuteronomy 16:8 that *maṣṣôt* were to be eaten for six days, not seven, since the Paschal sacrifice was, technically speaking, brought on the first day of the seven-day period, not on the eve of the festival.

2) *Šābūʿōt:*

A second consequence of the new pilgrimage system was the deferral of the spring harvest festival, called *ḥag haqqāṣîr* "the pilgrimage festival of reaping," to a day seven weeks after the beginning of the reaping of the first barley grain. Pursuant to this deferral, the name of the festival was changed from *qāṣîr* "reaping" to *šābūʿōt* "weeks." The theme of weeks is introduced in Deuteronomy 16, having been presaged in Exodus 34:22, a ritual code that reflects Deuteronomic perceptions of the festivals, as has been emphasized repeatedly. The reason for the deferral is simple: It was difficult for Israelites to leave their fields and travel to the central temple at the very time during the year when their presence was most required at home. So long as the duty of pilgrimage could have been fulfilled by visiting a nearby cult-site, the *ḥag* could be celebrated soon after the beginning of the reaping; now it was best delayed until after the reaping of both the barley and the wheat was completed. As we shall see, the priestly code retained the Deuteronomic deferral of this festival, but dealt with it in special ways so as to preserve its desacralizing character, a dimension lost in Deuteronomic legislation.

The meaning and intent of the cultic offering brought on this occasion have been inevitably altered. In some degree, the seven-week deferral of the pilgrimage effectively distanced Sabuʿot from the experience of desacralization. There was also a difference in the way that Deuteronomy conceived of cultic gifts brought on festivals. Instead of bringing an offering "of the first fruits of your produce that you have sown in the field" (Exod 23:16a), Israelites were now told to offer on the deferred festival "the payment of your donated contribution" (*missat nidbat yādekā*) that you shall remit, commensurate with the blessings YHWH your God grants you" (Deut 16:10). In the Deuteronomic perception, the offering brought on the pilgrimage festival of weeks represented something akin to a tithe, a payment whose appropriate quantity would be determined on the basis of the total yield of grain. The Hebrew *nidbat yādekā* "your donated contribution" of Deuteronomy 16:10 is synonymous with *mattenat yādô kebirkat YHWH* "his donated gift, in accordance with YHWH's blessing" of Deuteronomy 16:16, in the summary statement of the festival law.

No calendar date is given for "day one" of the period of counting, nor is there any explanation as to why the deferral was to last seven weeks. What Deuteronomy 16:1 says is that on the very day the sickle is first put to the standing grain Israelites must begin to count off seven weeks. This would inevitably bring the pilgrimage of the grain harvest into the month of Sivan, roughly corresponding to June. According to the system projected in Leviticus 23:9–22, to be examined in due course, the second festival, no longer a pilgrimage, would have most likely fallen at the middle of Sivan.

3) *Sūkkôt:*

Deuteronomy 16 changed the name of the autumn harvest festival from *ʾāsîp* "ingathering" to *sukkôt* "booths," and treated this festival as the principal pilgrimage of the year, extending its duration to seven days. As Ginsberg explains, temporary dwellings were set up in the religious capital, unnamed in Deuteronomy, but historically Jerusalem, as a practical measure to accommodate pilgrims from all parts of the country. This accounts for the new name of the festival and for the custom of dwelling in booths, a custom subsequently explained by historical reference in Leviticus 23:22–23. After leaving Egypt, the Israelites had dwelled in booths in the wilderness. This is, in fact, just how Nehemiah 8, reflecting religious practice during the Persian Period, describes the celebration of the Sukkoth festival in Jerusalem, albeit it in pious tones rather than practical terms.

Deuteronomy 16:13 identifies the time of the autumn pilgrimage as "when you gather in from your threshing floor and your vat" (Deut 16:13), which is to say, after the yield of the vineyards and orchards, mainly olive orchards, had been processed. In Exodus 23:16b, the time of the pilgrimage had been stated as "when you gather in your produce from the field," namely, at the time of the harvest. We see once again, as in the case of the spring harvest, how Deuteronomic legislation altered the meaning and specific intent of the cultic offering, which now consisted not of cut grape clusters or olives, but of new wine and pressed olive oil. The cultic offering of the pilgrimage no longer functioned as initial desacralization, but as a gift from the processed yield.

A Ugaritic temple ritual, *KTU*$_2$ 1.41//1.87, recently edited and interpreted by Levine-de Tarragon (1993), can provide a model for this very progression. The Ugaritic text records the celebration of the vintage in the autumn of the year. It took place during the month of *rišyn* "the first of the wine," most probably the same as the seventh month in the priestly system. On the New Moon of *rišyn*, a ceremonial act, referred to in Ugaritic as *šmtr uṯkl* "the cutting of the grape cluster," was performed, and sacrifices were offered on that occasion. On the fourteenth day of the month, an elaborate celebration took place, with standard sacrifices, but also with the dedication of goblets and chalices, and the pouring of libations from the new wine. The Ugaritic calendar for the month of *rišyn* thus expresses both initial desacralization, in the cutting of the grape cluster, followed by the offering of gifts from the processed yield of the vineyards, two weeks later. It may be, as Ginsberg (1982:59) concludes, that in the pre-Deuteronomic legislation the *ʾāsîp* festival was scheduled on the New Moon, but that in Deuteronomy it, too, was deferred until the middle of the month.

Before assessing the impact of priestly legislation on both the schedule and character of the annual festivals, we should deal with the problem of integrating the provisions of Exodus 34:17–26, "The Second Ritual Decalogue," as

Ginsberg calls it, within the development of the annual festivals, especially the autumn pilgrimage festival. This code has already been cited several times in these Comments, where its affinity to Deuteronomic legislation has been noted. Ginsberg regarded the author of Exodus 34:17–26 as a dissident Deuteronomist, who rephrased earlier laws of the Elohist in Exodus 12, 13 and 23, in accordance with his own agenda. The wording of Exodus 34:24 surely recalls the Deuteronomic restriction of sacrifice to one central temple, as Ginsberg realized. This verse speaks of pilgrims in an expanded land leaving their farms unattended in order to undertake a lengthy voyage, and it reassures them that their possessions will be safe while they are away. Furthermore, this legislator endorsed the interpretation that Deuteronomy 16 lent to the *pesaḥ-maṣṣôt* complex, for he refers to *zebaḥ ḥag happesaḥ* "the sacred meal of the Paschal pilgrimage festival" (Exod 34:25), of which no part may be left until morning. Only one who had endorsed the Deuteronomic combination of the two sacrifices and the rescheduling of the *ḥag* from the seventh to the first day would have generated such a composite term. And yet, this same author sticks closer to the original wording of Exodus 23:15 in referring to the seven days of the *maṣṣôt* festival, whereas Deuteronomy 16:8 more accurately refers to six days. In dealing with the second pilgrimage, the author of Exodus 34:17–26 employs the Deuteronomic name *šābūʿōt* "weeks," thereby endorsing its deferral, and designates it as a *ḥag*, accordingly characterizing the relevant cultic offering as *bikkûrê qeṣîr ḥiṭṭîm* "the first fruits of the reaping of the wheat" (Exod 34:21). Further on, in Exodus 34:26, this author again emphasizes the role of descralization by stating: "The choicest of the first fruits of your land shall you bring to the temple of YHWH, your God." In terms of intent, this emphasis on descralization virtually anticipates the priestly rite of presenting the *ʿomer* "sheaf, armful" (Lev 23:9–14), because in the scheme of Exodus 34:17–26, some of the first fruits of the wheat harvest would undoubtedly have to be set aside to be offered at the pilgrimage of *šābūʿōt*. Where the ritual code of Exodus 34:17–26 is truly problematic is in its treatment of the autumn festival of ingathering. First of all, it retains the old name, *ʾāsîp*, instead of adopting the Deuteronomic name, *sūkkôt*, and accordingly fails to extend the pilgrimage for seven days. Instead of regarding the author of Exodus 34:17–26 as a dissident Deuteronomist, we should perhaps consider him an early priestly legislator. His emphasis is surely on the cultic aspects of the pilgrimage festivals, namely, on the presentation of gifts at the temple. As has been noted, he places great importance on desacralization, a particular emphasis of the Holiness Code.

In historical perspective, the provisions of Deuteronomy 16 and of Exodus 34:17–26 place us in the near-exilic period, ca. 622 B.C.E., when the edict of Josiah was issued. Assuming that Leviticus 23 and Numbers 28–29 constitute responses to Deuteronomic doctrine, we are to conclude that priestly legislation was formulated subsequent to that time, namely, in the exilic and postexilic periods. Some have argued that some priestly legislation harks back to the reign of Hezekiah, near the end of the eighth to the early seventh century B.C.E. In this view, it was stimulated by Hezekiah's efforts to implement the Deuteronomic doctrine of cult centralization that had been transmitted to Jerusalem after the fall of the northern Israelite kingdom in 722 B.C.E. This view is most thoroughly argued by Haran (1985). We have opted here for a postexilic provenance based on both biblical and comparative evidence pointing to the central role of the Temple of Jerusalem and to the sociopolitical character of the restored Judean community during the Persian Period.

COMMENT 6: PRIESTLY LEGISLATION GOVERNING THE ANNUAL CELEBRATIONS

Enter the priestly calendar of the Holiness Code represented by Leviticus 23, followed by the later priestly calendar of Numbers 28–29. There are other priestly texts to be considered as well, as they relate to these two principal sources. The first pattern of innovation observable in Leviticus 23 is the scheduling of festivals on precise dates, in ordinally registered months. This system has already been noted and commented upon in passing, and we have explained that it is based on a vernal inception. This way of counting years is most explicitly stated in Exodus 12:1–20, 43–50, a priestly text of relatively late authorship, judging from its language and formulation. There it is written: "This month (= the month of *'Ābîb*) shall be for you the 'head' of months (*rō'š hodāṣ̌îm*); it shall be for you first among the months of the year" (Exod 12:2). Ginsberg (1982:67) dated the change in the formula of registering months to the near-exilic period. Thus, Jeremiah 36:9, 22 date an event during the fifth year of Jehoiachin "in the ninth month" (*baḥōdeš hattešî'î*), when the king is described as residing in his winter home. Apart from demonstrating the system of ordinal numbers to designate months, this entry would only make sense if the first month was reckoned in the spring of the year, and indicates that the switch to the vernal inception had already taken place (cf. similar dating back in Ezek 1:1, 33:22). Ginsberg also calls attention to Hebrew epigraphic evidence dating to the late seventh and early sixth centuries B.C.E. where we begin to notice dating by ordinally registered months. Thus, in Arad Ostracon no. 7, lines 3–4, we read that a shipment is to be dispatched: *l'śry b* 1 *lḥdš 'd haššiššāh lḥdš* "at the tenth [month], on the first of the month until the sixth of the month" (Ahituv 1992:64–65).

We know that at certain periods the Babylonian year began in the spring, in the month of *Nisannu* (Hebrew *Nisān*). We possess the New Year's ritual, the *akītu,* from the temple of Esagila in Babylon, dating from the Seleucid Period, in which this celebration is dated on the second day of Nisannu (J. Klein 1992, in *ABD* I:139–140). In time, the New Moon of the seventh month in priestly legislation would attain special status as the Jewish New Year, so that ironically a term that meant "beginning," namely *tišrê* (compare Babylonian *tašrītu*), after having become the name for the seventh month, would revert to being the functional first month! But, in priestly sections of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, the first month came in the spring. In text-historical terms, this change is first introduced and applied in Leviticus 23.

Another innovation introduced in Leviticus 23 is the characterization of the festivals, and even of the Sabbath and certain annual occasions as *miqrā' qōdeš* "sanctuary convocation." This term has been explained in Notes to Numbers 28:18, but more needs to be said about the development and character of such occasions. What we observe in Leviticus 23 and in Numbers 28–29 is an interaction between the pilgrimage and the sanctuary convocation as alternative mechanisms for assembling the religious community. The priestly occasion named *miqrā' qōdeš* probably developed from the occasion known as *'aṣeret* "sacred assembly," a feature of religious life in temple cities like Jerusalem, where "the proclamation of convocations" (*qerō' miqrā'*), as expressed in Isaiah 1:13, brought the public to the Temple on special occasions. Isaiah 4:5 even preserves a term for those areas on Mount Zion, near the Temple, that were set aside for just such occasions. It is *miqrā'îm.*

In Deuteronomy 16:8, the celebration of the seventh day of the *maṣṣôt* festival is called *'aṣeret,* and it has been explained how this came to be so. In the Deuteronomic system, the pilgrimage of the *maṣṣôt* festival was shifted from the seventh to the first day of the festival, and the seventh day was as a result declared an *'aṣeret* so as to preserve something of its sanctity. Ultimately, the same objective will account for the declaration of the day after the seven-day Sukkoth festival, the eighth day, as an *'aṣeret* (see further). Under the Deuteronomic system, adopted by the Holiness Code, the *'aṣeret* served two complementary purposes: In the religious capital, at the Temple, it would function as a gathering of local dimensions. In Israelite communities all over the land such convocations would be celebrated by cessation from assigned labor tasks within the framework of the family and of the local society. This latter function is highlighted by repeated references in Leviticus 23 to the Israelite settlements, Hebrew *môšābôt* (Lev 23:3, 13–14, 21; Levine 1989b:155, s.v. Lev 23:3). This local function is anticipated in Deuteronomy 16:7–8 where the Israelites are instructed to return to their tents there to observe an *'aṣeret* on the seventh day of the *maṣṣôt* festival. In other words, priestly legislation mirrors a new situation for which the groundwork had been laid in the Deuteronomic reforms. For most Israelites, one annual pilgrimage to the central Temple in Jerusalem in the autumn of the year was all, if not more than could be expected. The second pilgrimage of the first fruits, deferred for seven weeks in Deuteronomy 16, was no longer classified as *ḥag* in Leviticus 23. Leviticus 23:17 ordains that "from your settlements you shall deliver a grain offering from the new crop" (*minḥāh ḥadāšāh*). This offering would be presented at the central Temple on the Festival of Weeks (*šabūʿōt*), but its presentation did not require one to appear in person, as would be true of a pilgrimage.

A further aspect of festival legislation in Leviticus 23 is the reinstatement of desacralization as the primary intent of cultic offerings brought on the spring and autumn harvest festivals. Deuteronomic legislation effectively deprived the cultic offerings brought on these two occasions of their desacralizing function. In contrast, the priestly legislators were committed to this function, a commitment anticipated in Exodus 34:17–26 and clearly expressed in the treatment of the period of the seven-week deferral in the Holiness Code, precisely in Leviticus 23:9–22. A presentation rite is introduced at the beginning of the seven-week period between *pesaḥ-maṣṣôt* and the festival of first fruits so that Israelites will have given God his due before processing and partaking of the new barley, and subsequently, of the new wheat crop. A "sheaf" (*ʿōmer*), or armful is to be delivered to the priest who promptly offers in the mode of *tenûpāh* "raised offering" at the central Temple. Prior to this presentation Israelites were forbidden to eat bread, parched grain or fresh ears from the new crop (Lev 23:10–11, 14). Then, seven weeks later, loaves of leavened bread were to be presented at the central Temple from the new wheat crop as first fruits (*bikkurim*) on the deferred festival (Lev 23:17).

In the second version of the autumn pilgrimage law (Lev 23:39), we encounter a close paraphrase of Exodus 23:16b that effectively restores the desacralizing function of the offering brought on that occasion. The seven-day pilgrimage was to take place "when you gather in the crop of your land (*beʾospekā et tebûʾ at hāʾāreṣ*)," words reminiscent of Exodus 23:16b: "when you gather in your produce from the field." These formulations both contrast with Deuteronomy 16:13: "when you gather in from your threshing floor and from your vat," a reference to the processed yield. In the spring of the year the deferral of the festival of first fruits had necessitated a special offering at the beginning of the counting so as to retain a rite of desacralization, a matter of importance to the authors of the Holiness Code. As an aside, it should be noted that the problem of relating the offering of first fruits ordained in Leviticus 23:17 to what is prescribed in Leviticus 2:14–16 has occupied the attention of commentators since late antiquity. There is a strong similarity between the two offerings, and yet it seems that Leviticus 2:14–16 are speaking of a voluntary offering of first fruits that was not related in its timing with the spring harvest festival. It was adapted to the mode of the burnt altar offering and as a consequence consisted of unleavened bread.

Historically, Leviticus 23 has had a bearing on the world history of the week, as we know it; a unit of seven days that ends on the Jewish Sabbath. There is strong reason to believe that the Romans adopted the so-called sabbatical week from Judaism (Tigay 1974). The result has been that in Christian societies the week begins on Sunday and ends on Saturday, even though the significance of the Jewish Sabbath has been overshadowed by Sunday, the Lord's Day. More immediately, it is the descriptive term *šabbātôn*, literally, a "sabbath-like" occasion, that expresses the underlying symbolism of the Sabbath in the Holiness Code, and in priestly texts influenced by it. We have already spoken of the seven-week deferral of the spring harvest festival, and of the period of counting by sabbatical weeks introduced in Leviticus 23.

Moving to the autumn of the year, we must consider the basis for the *ʿaṣeret* of the eighth day after the seven-day autumn pilgrimage. It is reasonable to conclude that this *ʿaṣeret* commemorated an older New Year that had been observed when an autumnal inception was the basis of the calendar. With the festival of Sukkoth ending on the twenty-second day of the month according to the Deuteronomic schedule, that old New Year would have been celebrated only a week later. By attaching an eighth day to Sukkoth the priestly legislators may have sought to commemorate that older sacred occasion, lost to calendrical change.

To summarize the import of Leviticus 23: Deuteronomic legislation is endorsed by (a) fixing the *maṣṣôt* pilgrimage on the first day of the festival, not on the seventh; (b) accepting the Deuteronomic deferral of the spring harvest festival, though no longer regarding it as a *ḥag*; and (c) extending the Sukkoth pilgrimage to last seven days. Nevertheless, Leviticus 23 restores the separate Paschal sacrifice to the eve of the *maṣṣôt* festival. It innovates an initial rite of desacralization, and computes the seven weeks, that Deuteronomy counted as seven-day units, as sabbatical weeks, thereby fixing "day one" as the morrow of the first Sabbath coming after the seven-day *maṣṣôt* festival. Finally, it adds an eighth day to the autumn harvest festival as an *ʿaṣeret*, a status promptly abandoned in the second statement on the Sukkoth festival in Leviticus 23:42–43, where the name *sūkkôt* is explained in historical terms. Leviticus further ordains that the New Moon of the seventh month be a sacred day and it legislates an annual *yôm kippûrîm* "Day of Expiation Rites" based on the provisions of Leviticus 16, particularly Leviticus 16:29–34.

It is now possible to place the festival legislation of Numbers 28–29 in proper perspective without very much additional discussion. The particulars of this ritual code have been discussed in due course. By and large it adds greater specificity and elaboration to what it retains of earlier priestly legislation, and rejects what it does not wish to preserve. In most respects, Numbers 28–29 represents the final statement of the priestly school of Torah writers on the public cultic celebration of sacred days. It tends to ignore aspects that do not pertain to the Temple cult and says very little about the significance of the festivals and holy days. Tracing the complex relationship between Numbers 28–29 and Leviticus 23 suggests that there was a degree of diversity in religious observance during the Persian postexilic period, as well as considerable innovation in religious experience.

PART VII.

NUMBERS 30: INNOVATIONS IN THE VOTIVE SYSTEM

◆

INTRODUCTION

The overt agenda of this section of Numbers is the legal force of vows and binding obligations undertaken under oath, but its inner agenda relates to the legal status of women vis-à-vis men in biblical law. As such, it is a singular example of the appropriation of a primary phenomenon operative in biblical religion, the votive system, and its application by priestly writers to family law. It is also a rather remarkable instance of legal innovation; it creates a new type of binding agreement, one whose validity is sanctioned by oath. This legal instrumentality is termed *šebūʿat ʾissār* "a binding obligation assumed under oath" (Num 30:14). In effect, a person swears under oath that he or she will enter into a written agreement. The interaction of religion and law is subtle in Numbers 30, and proper interpretation of its provisions requires an awareness of the practicalities of Israelite life, not only of the religious values informing it. As will be brought out in the Comments to Numbers 30, this code of law probably has more to do with legal status than with religious devotion.

The present chapter endorses the principle that men become legally autonomous once attaining majority, and are accordingly accountable for their legal actions and personally responsible for fulfilling their binding, verbal obligations. Not so women; they remain, for the most part, under the legal guardianship of their fathers, and subsequently their husbands, who bear responsibility for the obligations undertaken by their daughters and wives, respectively. Only widows and divorcees bear responsibility for their oaths and vows (unless these had been disallowed while the woman in question was still married), since there was no man available who could currently be held responsible for them. Such unfortunate women normally depended on the good will of their sons and brothers.

The code of law begins in Numbers 30:3 with a general statement that men are bound by the vows they pronounce, and by the oaths they take. This legal principle is established in Deuteronomy 23:22–24, and echoed in the instructions of Koheleth (5:3–4). As regards the inviolability of oaths taken in God's name, we have no less than the statements of the Decalogue (Exod 20:7, Deut 5:11), of Leviticus 5:4, 19:12. Pursuant to this introductory statement, Numbers 30 proceeds to its true concern, the legal status of women who have pronounced vows and taken oaths, and by so doing have assumed binding obligations, often involving cost. The intent of the law code was to afford fathers and husbands a way to disclaim responsibility for such obligations if they wished to do so. Whoever the man involved, whether father or husband, was required to make a declaration to disavow the women's pronouncements at the time he first heard them if, indeed, he was unprepared to assume the concomitant obligations. Remaining mute and thus failing to disallow the binding verbal commitments of wives and unmarried daughters within the stipulated time constraint was taken as a tacit indication of the willingness of the man involved to let the commitments stand, and to be responsible for meeting them. Any attempt on the part of the man involved to disavow such committal statements at a later stage so as to avoid the relevant obligations was a punishable offense (Num 30:4–16).

The chapter concludes with a postscript, Numbers 30:17, stating that the above are the *ḥuqqîm* "statutes" obtaining between husband and wife and between father and resident premarital daughter. In the Comments, an attempt will be made to place the provisions of Numbers 30:2–17 in the context of the biblical texts governing vows, and to interpret them in this light. It should be possible to discern those realities of Israelite life that Numbers 30 addresses, and to discern what the vows and binding agreements of Israelite women, before marriage and subsequent to it, were really about.

TRANSLATION

30 [2]Moses addressed the tribal heads of the Israelite people as follows: "This is the dictum that YHWH has commanded:

[3]"If a man pronounces a vow to YHWH, or takes an oath to obligate himself by a binding agreement, he may not profane his pledged word. According to all that issues forth from his mouth, so shall he perform.

[4]"If a woman pronounces a vow to YHWH, or obligates herself by a binding agreement while still in her father's house during her youth,

[5]"and her father heard her vow, or the binding agreement by which she obligated herself, but her father kept silent with respect to her, all her vows shall remain in force, and any binding agreement by which she had obligated herself shall remain in force, as well.

[6]"But if her father disavowed her at the time of his hearing, none of her vows, or her binding agreements by which she had obligated herself shall remain in force. YHWH will pardon her, because her father has disavowed her.

[7]"Should she be married to a man at a time when her vows were incumbent upon her, or any verbal statement by which she may have obligated herself,

[8]"and her husband kept silent with respect to her at the time of his hearing, her vows shall remain in force, and her binding agreements by which she had obligated herself shall remain in force, as well.

[9]"But if her husband disavowed her at the time of his hearing, he may annul her vow that was binding upon her, and any verbal statement by which she had obligated herself. YHWH will pardon her.

[10]"As for the vow of a widow or divorcee, whatever binding agreements she had assumed upon herself shall remain in force.

[11]"But if she had pronounced the vow while still in her husband's domicile, or had [at that time] assumed a binding agreement upon herself, under oath,

[12]"and if her husband heard, but kept silent with regard to her, and did not disavow her, all her vows shall remain in force, and every binding agreement by which she had obligated herself shall remain in force, as well.

[13]"But if her husband had, indeed, annulled them at the time of his hearing, whatever issued forth from her lips regarding her vows or the binding agreements by which she obligated herself shall not remain in force.

[14]"As regards any vow, or any oath to assume a binding agreement to practice self-affliction, it is her husband who must reaffirm it, and it is her husband who must annul it.

[15]"If her husband keeps silent with regard to her, as the days pass, he has [in effect] reaffirmed all her vows, and all her binding agreements by which she is obligated. He has reaffirmed them by virtue of keeping silent at the time of his hearing.

[16]"But, should he purposely annul them only subsequent to his having heard [them], it is he who shall bear the penalty of her offense."

[17]These are the statutes that YHWH commanded Moses, concerning relations between a man and his wife, and between a father and his daughter during her youth, while in her father's house.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 30:2–17: THE VOWS AND OATHS OF WOMEN

2. *Moses addressed the tribal heads of the Israelite people.* Moses is here the transmitter of God's commandment; he speaks in the name of God. Other examples of this role are to be found in Exodus 16:16, 32, 35:4. In priestly literature it is more normal to find YHWH issuing a command to Moses, which he then transmits to the Israelites. The title *rā'šê hammaṭṭôt libenê Yiśrā'ēl* "the tribal heads of the Israelite people" is unique to this verse, but similar constructions that combine or condense discrete leadership titles do occur (see Notes to Num 7:2, and cf. Num 32:28, Josh 14:1, 21:1). 1 Kings 8:1 may preserve the fuller form of the present title: *'et kol rā'šê hā'ābôt neśî ê hammaṭṭôt libenê Yiśrā'ēl* "all of the heads of the patriarchal 'houses,' the chieftains of the Israelite tribes."

3. *"If a man pronounces a vow to YHWH."* The syntax of the protasis, or conditional clause, is convoluted, and care has been taken to reflect this in the translation. This verse, and the chapter as a whole, are speaking of three types of commitments, two of them verbal and one written: (1) the vow, Hebrew *neder*; (2) the oath, Hebrew *šebû'āh*; and (3) a type of contractual obligation

known as *ʾissār* or *ʾesār* "binding agreement," usually executed in writing. The principal difference between vows and oaths is that one's obligations under the terms of a vow, whatever they may consist of and to whomsoever they may pertain, do not become due until and unless the other party, none other than God, himself, fufills his promise. Performance by one pronouncing a vow is thus suspended, and contingent upon prior performance by God. (On the term *neder* "vow" see Notes to Num 6:2; Levine 1993:218–219; Levine 1989b:43–44, s.v. Lev 7:16). In contrast, the obligations of one uttering an oath begin at the moment when the oath is pronounced. Finally, the obligations of one entering into a binding agreement (Hebrew *ʾissār*, *ʾesār*) begin at the time of contractual enactment (see further). As adapted by the author of Numbers 30, the enactment of *šebūʿat*, *ʾissār* involves God in a binding agreement between parties through the words of the oath taken in his name. The attendant obligations occur in sequence: First, a person swears to enter into a binding agreement whose specific terms are then set forth in binding, written form. In effect, God is the guarantor of the agreement, whereas its performer, or performers are human.

"he may not profane his pledged word."

A man must perform all that he pledged, and failure to do so constitutes profanation. The Hebrew form *yaḥēl* is the Hiphil of the root *ḥ-l-l*, "to defile, desecrate," and recalls repeated statements in Ezekiel 20:9, 14, 22, in which God is said to have fulfilled his sworn promises: *lebiltî hēḥēl le ʿênê haggôyîm* "so as not to commit a profane act in the sight of the nations" (also cf. Lev 21:4, 9, Isa 48:11). The present statement: *kekol hayyoṣēʾ mippîw yaʿaśeh* "according to all that issues from his mouth, so shall he perform" resonates with Deuteronomy 23:24: *môṣā sēpāteka tišmōr* "You must uphold the utterance of your lips." The sense of Hebrew *nepeš* here, in the phrase *ʿal napšô* "upon himself," is merely reflexive, and carries no spiritual connotation.

The term *ʾissār/ʾesār* is central to the provisions of this legal code. It expresses the action of binding, conveyed by the Hebrew verb *ʾ-s-r* "to bind," in a manner similar to the Akkadian verb *rakāsu* "to bind," which yields such terms as *riksu* "binding agreement," and *ṭuppi riksi* "a tablet of binding agreement, a contract" (*AHw*: 945–947, s.v. *rakāsu*; 984–985, s.v. *riksu*). That a contractual relationship "binds" one party to another is a virtually universal concept. In form, the term *ʾissar* represents a Piel-based noun form attested in Late Hebrew. Cf. *ʿiqqār* "root" (Levy 1963:III, 689, s.v. *ʿiqqār*). However, the form *ʾissār* is only attested in the singular absolute, whereas the plural is *ʾesārîm*, not *ʾissārîm*, and declined forms predicate a simple stem identical in the singular with the Aramaic form, *ʾesār* (Dan 6:8–10, 13–14, 16). Thus, singular *ʾesārāh* "her *ʾesār*" (Num 30:5) and plural *ʾesārêhā* (written defectively as *ʾsrh*) "her *ʾesārîm*" (Num 30:8). It is likely, therefore, that the vocalization *ʾissār* is secondary, probably the creation of a later Masorete who generated a Hebrew model of the Aramaic cognate.

In Daniel, the Aramaic term *ʾesār* bears the sense of a royal decree, and in context refers to an edict prohibiting all persons from petitioning any deity or human authority for a period of three days. Royal officials then proceeded to accuse Daniel of violating the royal *ʾesār* by having prayed to the God of Israel. The meaning attested in Daniel has unduly affected the interpretation of Numbers 30 in overly emphasizing the prohibitive aspect of the phenomenon, conveyed by the meaning "ban" that figures so prominently in the Talmudic legal tradition. Actually, the term *ʾesār* has a long history in the Aramaic common law tradition and in later Jewish sources as well, and exhibits a variety of connotations. Most relevant are its occurrences in Aramaic legal papyri from Saqqara of Egypt of the fourth century B.C.E., and in the Wadi Daliyeh papyri from the mid-to-late fourth century B.C.E. It has now turned up in the Hebrew and Aramic papyri from Nahal Hever, on the Dead Sea, dating to the late first and early second century C.E. (Yadin-Greenfield-Yardeni 1996:384, s.v. Papyrus Yadin 7, lines 1–15). It would be most instructive to analyze the evidence of the Achaemenid Period for a proper understanding of the provisions of Numbers 30 in contemporary context.

The two references to Aramaic *‘esar* in the Aramaic Saqqara papyri yield the sense of an agreed upon, binding legal obligation. Thus, in Porten-Yardeni (1989:170, s.v. B8.10, lines 1–2), there is a statement, incompletely preserved, that reads as follows:

> -] *yhbt lh. wspr ʾsrn ktbn (= yahbēt lēh/ lah wesepar ʾesārīn ketabān)*
>
> -] "I conveyed to him/her, and a document of binding agreements we drew up."

This statement comes from a document recording the purchase or exchange of fields *(ḥqltʾ)*. Technically, the legal term *ʾesār*, plural *ʾesārīn*, refers to the enactment agreed upon by the parties not to the actual document, which is designated *separ ʾesārīn* "document of binding agreement." Nevertheless, the term *ʾesār* might connote the contract itself, in a functional sense. This may be the case in Porten-Yardeni (1989:128, s.v. B5.6, lines 10–11):

> *] qymh wʾsrh. ktb wʿbd kl ʾsryʾ zy mn ʿlʾ ktyb (= qeyāmāh weʾesārāh ketab, waʿabad kol ʾesārayyāʾ zî men ʿēlāʾ ketîb)*
>
>] "the covenant and the binding agreement. He signed for and fulfilled all the binding agreements *(ʾesārayyaʾ) that are written above.*"

This latter statement appears in a slave conveyance document, and is immediately followed by a release clause. In effect, one of the parties is declaring that he did what he was obligated to do under his contract.

Moving to the Wadi Daliyeh papyri from fourth-century B.C.E. Samaria, studied by F. M. Cross, Jr. (1985, 1986) and D. Gropp (1986), we again note the function of the term *'esār* in legal transactions. In papyrus 1, we read an important attestation of the initially voluntary character of the *'esār:*

> *wrʿyw ḥd mn ḥd 'sr' bynyhm. wznh 'sr' hqymw/ bynyhm* (= *were îyû ḥad men ḥad 'esārā' bênêhōm. wezenāh 'esārā' haqîmû bênêhōm—*
>
> "And they were mutually satisfied with the binding agreement between them. And this is the binding agreement they put into effect between them—"

This statement is followed by the relevant contingencies of the contract. Further stipulations also employ the term *'esār*. Thus, there is provision for possible reneging by one or the other party: "Or, if I renege on this binding agreement (*'esārā'*) that I put into effect with you" (lines 6–7), and a statement of obligation to pay silver "in accordance with this binding agreement" (*'esārā'*; line 9).

The above evidence on the term *'esār* as it was used in documents from the Achaemenid Period should inform us regarding its usage in Numbers 30. This evidence indicates that *'esār* designates a contractual relationship, initially entered into voluntarily, and that then becomes binding. It is this phase of the process that is expressive of its etymology. One notes the significance of the verb *q-w-m* "to stand; be valid, in force" in the Wadi Daliyeh papyri, a subject to be taken up below, in Notes to Numbers 30:4–5.

To summarize: Numbers 30:3 states the general rule that a man must fulfill what he pledges to do by vow, or by binding agreement sanctioned by oath, an obligation conveyed by the term *'issār*, a secondary vocalization of Aramaic-Hebrew *'esār*. What this means is that the author of Numbers 30:2–17 appropriated a term from the Aramaic legal tradition of the Achaemenid Period and lent to it a quasisacral connotation symmetrical with Hebrew *neder*. In effect, Numbers 30 projects an oath-sanctioned agreement. This oath was not required or imposed; it shares the initiative character of the vow. There is no indication, moreover, that the term *'issār/'esār* was primarily, or necessarily prohibitive, although it may have been so in certain instances. Thus, one may be bound both by positive obligations and requisite performances, or be bound not to do certain things; to desist, refrain or abstain from them. More will be said on this score in the Comments to Numbers 30, and see Notes to Numbers 30:14, below.

4–5. *"while still in her father's house during her youth."* The status of a man in Israel contrasts with that of a woman, whose verbal commitments may be disavowed by the man who exercises legal control over her, her father or husband. The case of a young unmarried woman residing in her father's house is taken up first. Idiomatic *bineʿûrêhāh* "during her youth" (cf. Lev 22:13) is never specifically defined in terms of age, but tradition has it that a young woman is classified *nāʿarāh* beginning at the age of twelve years and a day, or the onslaught of puberty (Mishnah, *Ketûbbôt* 5:2). The period of "youth" for an as yet unmarried young woman would extend a minimum of a year, probably longer. That the hypothetical woman in question had yet to be married for the first time is alluded to by stating that she resided in her father's house. The extended protasis continues through Numbers 30:5a, as indicated by the way the translation is punctuated. It is significant that in the formulation of Numbers 30:4–5, there is no reference to an oath as having initiated the binding agreement of a woman as there was in the statement regarding a man, in the previous verse. It is to be assumed, however, that generally speaking, the woman also took an oath to enter into a binding agreement. In fact, Numbers 30:11 says as much in one case. Quite possibly, the full formulation of verse 3 was merely condensed in repetition.

"but her father kept silent"

Hebrew *heḥerîš*, a Hiphil form with stative force, means "to maintain silence, keep silent." Thus, 2 Kings 18:36: *weheḥerîšû hāʿām welōʾ ʿānû ʾōtô dābār* "The people kept silent and did not respond to him in any way" (cf. Judg 18:19, 2 Sam 19:11). In legal idiom, one would translate *heḥerîs*: "to stand mute."

"all her vows shall remain in force"

The apodasis begins with the verb *weqāmû* "they shall be in force, remain valid." The common West Semitic verb *q-w-m* assumes added nuance in the Aramaic legal tradition and in biblical legal statements where its usage was most likely affected by Aramaic (Levine 1981, 1989). Thus, Leviticus 25:30: "The urban dwelling shall [thereupon] become the property (*weqām le-*) . . . of its purchaser." In a similar vein, cf. Genesis 23:17–18: "The field of Ephron . . . [thereupon] became the property (*wayyaqom le-*) of Abraham by right of purchase." The sense here is that without an explicit statement to disallow vows by the father of a resident unmarried young woman, her vows and binding agreements would remain in force, by default.

6. *"But if her father disavowed her."* The alternative situation is now projected, namely, that the woman's father had, indeed, made a statement of disallowance upon first hearing the pronouncements of his young unmarried daughter. The rare Hebrew verb *hēnîʾ*, from the root *n-w-ʾ*, also occurs in Numbers 32:7, 9 where the *Qere* projects this same Hiphil form, *hēnîʾ*, that recurs repeatedly in Numbers 30. There is also the idiom *hēnîʾ lēb* "to disaffect, dissuade," and in Numbers 14:34, the derivative noun *tenûʿāh* connotes "denial," specifically, the denial or disavowal of God by the Israelites (see Notes to Num 14:34; Levine 1993:370). Adverbial *beyôm*, literally "on the day of-," means "at

the time of, when." In this sense "days, time" pass (Num 30:15). To be precise, the wording is that the father denied "her," herself, not that he disavowed his daughter's pronouncements, and this same metonymy is repeated later in this verse, and further in Numbers 30. However, in Numbers 30:9, there is greater elaboration: "—and [if] he disavows her, he may annul her vow" and in Numbers 30:13, below, the formulation is more precise: *weʾim hāpēr yāpēr ʾōtām* "But if he had, indeed, annulled them." To achieve greater precision one could translate *henî ʾōtāh* "he denied her [permission]." In that case, the father would have indicated his unwillingness to assume legal responsibility, and this would make the pronouncements of the young woman null and void. God would then pardon her actual failure to fulfill what she had pledged to perform. The verb *sālaḥ* "to forgive, pardon" here has legal force (see below, in Notes to Num 30:9, regarding the verb *hēpēr* "to annul," and see Notes to Num 14:20, 15:16; Levine 1993:367, 393).

7–8. *"Should she be married to a man."* The code of law now takes up the situation created by marriage, wherein the husband takes over the previously held responsibilities of the father. Once again, the protasis continues through verse 8a. The construction *hāyāh le-* here connotes possession or belonging, and in certain contexts expresses the process of marriage itself. Cf. Deuteronomy 24:2: "She shall depart from his house, and proceed to be married to another man (*wehālekāh wehāyetāh leʾîš ʾaḥēr*)." Further cf. usage in Ruth 1:11–13.

"at a time when her vows were incumbent upon her"

The function of prefixed *waw* in *ûnedārêhā ʿālêhā* is temporal and circumstantial, literally: "her vows being incumbent upon her." Prepositional *ʿal* in legal or official parlance often connotes obligation or liability, as in Proverbs 7:14: "I owe sacred offerings of greeting" (*zibḥê šelāmîm ʿālay*). Or, 2 Samuel 18:11: "I am obliged to pay you (*we ʿālay lātēt lekā*) ten pieces of silver" (cf. Gen 27:13, Judg 19:20).

"or any verbal statement"

To convey the sense of verbal commitment, the present verse (and cf. Num 30:9, below) utilizes the idiom *mibṭāʾ śepātayim*, literally "utterance of the lips," an alternative to *môsāʾ śepātayim* "issuance of the lips" as below, in Numbers 30:13, and in Deuteronomy 23:22–24. This recalls Leviticus 5:4, where taking an oath is expressed as *lebaṭṭeʾ biśepātayim* "to utter with one's lips." In case the husband remains silent at the time of his hearing, his inaction has the same effect as that of the woman's father before she was married.

9. *"But if her husband disavowed her."* This statement introduces the key verb *hēpēr* "to annul, render ineffectual"—a vow, covenant or design (Deut 31:16, 20, 2 Sam 17:4, Ps 33:10). It is derived from *p-w-r* (or geminate *p-r-r*)

"to break up, crush, destroy" (Ps 74:13), and is juxtaposed with *hēnî'* "to deny, disavow," the verb used in Numbers 30:6, above.

10. "*As for the vow of a widow or divorcee.*" The code of law now takes up the cases of widowed and divorced women who undertook obligations, vows or binding agreements at a time when there was no man in their lives to assume responsibility for them. There was no mechanism for them to secure release, and they were bound to fulfill their commitments at all costs. Their only recourse would be to seek the assistance of their sons or brothers, if available, but these were under no legal obligation to assume responsibility.

11–13. If the vows or binding agreements of a woman presently widowed or divorced had been undertaken initially while that woman was married, and if her husband had acted to have them annulled, the present widow or divorcee was free of obligation. If, however, her husband had remained silent at the time of his hearing, there was now nothing further to be done.

14. "*to practice self-affliction.*" The code introduces at this point a special category of vows and binding agreements taken under oath, namely, commitments to practice self-affliction. In biblical usage, idiomatic *ʿinnāh nepeš* "to torment the body, the self" customarily connotes fasting (Isa 58:3, 5, Ps 35:13), but it is likely that other sorts of asceticism and self-denial were also intended. The Mishnah (*Nedārîm*, Chapter 11) provides later examples of such self-denial, and these will be reviewed in the Comments. The construction *šebūʿat ʾissār*, "a binding agreement assumed under oath," epitomizes the adaptation of the contractual with the sacral, a subject also to be discussed in the Comments.

15–16. "*as the days pass.*" Idiomatic *miyyôm ʾel yôm*, literally means "from one day to the next." Prefixed *waw* in the verb *wehēqîm* introduces the protasis and defines it as a result clause: "He has [in effect] confirmed." It is well acknowledged that the Hiphil form *hēqîm* means both "to establish" initially, and "to reaffirm, endorse" at a subsequent stage.

"*it is he who shall bear the penalty of her offense.*"

In the formula *nāśā' ʿawōn*, the Hebrew term *ʿāwōn* functionally connotes the consequences of the offense, hence: "penalty" (see Notes to Num 18:1; Levine 1993:439–440).

17. *These are the statutes*. In the first instance, Hebrew *ḥoq*, plural *ḥuqqîm*, and related forms, designate those duties one is required to perform because they are inscribed, "etched in stone" (the verb *ḥ-q-q*). In comparable ways, the Hebrew term *miṣwāh* "order, commandment" indicates that the relevant obligation was ordered by one in authority, and *mišpāṭ* "judgment, norm" that the obligation derives from the judicial process. Here, *ʾēleh haḥūqqîm* has a summary function, but this formula can also introduce a series of statutes as

in Deuteronomy 12:1. In terms of its distribution, plural *ḥūqqîm* is most frequent in Deuteronomy and its offshoots, whereas feminine forms such as *ḥūqqāh,* plural *ḥūqqōt* are most favored by priestly writers.

COMMENTS

Numbers 30 presents a code of law dealing with two related verbal practices current in biblical Israel: vows and oaths, primarily those of women. As explained in Notes to Numbers 30, the type of oath referred to here is innovative. It committed one who pronounced the oath to a binding agreement to be executed in written form, namely, *šebūʿat ʾissār* "a binding agreement assumed under oath" (Num 30:14). Vows were conditional pledges pronounced orally. The most recent and the most incisive treatment of the institution of the *neder* "vow" in biblical Israel is by J. Berlinerblau (1996), entitled *The Vow and the "Popular Religious Groups" of Ancient Israel.* Berlinerblau challenges accepted views on the biblical votive system, and convincingly demonstrates that the pronouncement of vows was the act of an individual, at times on behalf of his or her family. He also endorses the initiative character of the vow, or, to put it another way, its initially voluntary character, disputing the notion that one could be required to take vows as part of the cult; that vows were a duty, or that they were regulated to any extent. He has no objection to the characterization of vows as "popular," if this term is understood properly, and not as antithetical to "official" religion. Nevertheless, he agrees that one could make a case for requiring that the fulfillment of vows be performed in a sacred place. As for oaths in biblical Israel, less has been written, and it will be necessary here to pinpoint the circumstances in which the oaths of women, as projected in Numbers 30, were applicable.

The great unanswered question about the provisions of Numbers 30 is that of realism: Which circumstances in the life of the ancient Israelite, or Jew, is this code of law dealing with? It is clearly referring to the legal status of women, as contrasted with that of men, but we have yet to identify the occasions when women normally pronounced vows or took oaths committing them to enter into binding agreements. What were their vows and their binding agreements about? One assumes that the same situations produced vows by women as did vows by men: a request for safe return from a journey, for healing and rescue and the like. Women would be less likely to vow in the face of battle than would a man, but more likely to ask God for a child than would a man. It is less clear what sorts of binding obligations women would undertake because we cannot be certain how much control women had over goods and property. There may also have been special behavioral patterns specific to women that would differentiate their vows and oaths from those normally taken by men.

COMMENT 1: GENDER DIFFERENTIATION AND ITS EFFECTS

As explained in Notes to Numbers 30:3, one pronouncing a *neder* pledges to give something to God if God will first do something on his or her behalf. Payment of the *neder* becomes due when God has done his part. Judging from the formulation of Numbers 30, this code of law is dealing with situations in which young unmarried women or married ones had pronounced vows and entered into binding agreements under oath on their own initiative. This indicates that the vows and oaths of women were binding in the first instance, and that women could undertake them without the prior knowledge or consent of their fathers or husbands. There is, however, another factor involved in the provisions of Numbers 30: This code of law assumes that fathers and husbands were responsible for making good on the commitments of their wives and daughters. This was probably due to the fact that women owned little if any property or wealth that was not under the control of their fathers and husbands. Such limitations on ownership of property and wealth by women produced a conflicting legal situation: On the one hand, women were free to assume obligations independently, whereas on the other, the legal responsibility to make good on these obligations befell the men in charge of them, their fathers and husbands.

Biblical information on the subject of legal acts by women is helpful but not sufficiently specific to allow for conclusive comparisons between the provisions of Numbers 30 and those of other biblical laws, narratives, prophecies and wisdom. Samuel's mother-to-be, Hannah, a married woman, made and fulfilled her own vow (1 Sam 1:11, 24–28). The women referred to in Jeremiah 44:24–25 paid their votive pledges to the queen of heaven, whom they improperly worshipped. Deuteronomy 23:19 subtly alludes to use of the harlot's hire for payment of vows, presumably pledged by women, a practice further suggested by Proverbs 7:14, where a harlot speaks about the sacrificial payment of her vows. Of the above, perhaps only the harlot had full control over her property.

Since many biblical laws, though framed in the masculine singular or plural, or introduced by the elliptical reference to ʾîš "man, person," generally apply to both men and women, there is every indication that women participated in the votive process freely, but there is no suggestion anywhere, except in Numbers 30, that their vows were subject to the tacit approval of the men in their lives. Therefore, the legislation of Numbers 30 in subjecting the vows of women to the authority of their fathers and husbands is innovative, and on other grounds, relatively late. The assumption that men were liable to make good on the vows of their unmarried daughters and wives would seem to be the norm, however. There is simply too little known about women's property in biblical Israel to be certain of this.

As for oaths, the only explicit reference in the Hebrew Bible to a woman who took an oath is to be found in the ritual ordeal of the wife suspected of infidelity, to whom the priest administered a compulsory oath (Numbers 5). This singular case nevertheless establishes the reliability of a woman's statement under oath, and one may infer that women normally took oaths in God's name. Given the legal limitations imposed on women in biblical law, certain oaths of a juridical character would not be administered to women. We know very little, indeed, about the activities of women in this regard. From Numbers 30 we learn, nonetheless, that women could rightfully guarantee their binding agreements by oath, and that such oaths were valid, and had to be fulfilled by someone, if not by the women themselves.

The provisions of Numbers 30 presuppose that women made commitments that involved cost and value, because that is what the *ʾissār/ʾesār* normally involved, and the *neder*, too. Even commitments of an ascetic or deprivational character, aside from affecting interpersonal relations of concern to the men of the family, would normally end up costing something. Thus, the vow of the Nazirite, in which women most likely participated (as one would gather from the narrative of Judg 13) eventually required a sacrificial offering that had to be paid for (Num 5). Hannah, in addition to surrendering her son, also brought offerings to the temple at Shiloh. We may assume that once Hannah pledged to bring her son to the temple at Shiloh and devote him to cultic service, her husband could not object, nor was his prior consent required, and yet he would have had to come up with whatever was needed to fulfill the votive dues. It is unlikely that Hannah owned cattle or *Opfermaterie* on her own. In this respect, the traditional votive system afforded women an area of independence and maneuverability, and, as Berlinerblau emphasizes, of direct, unregulated access to God.

It would appear that Numbers 30 was aimed at restricting the traditional right of women to make verbal commitments that involved cost and value. Another way of looking at Numbers 30 is as a reaction against what may been the greater freedom afforded women to own property and to engage in business transactions during the Achaemenid Period. The fact that the term *ʾesār* was appropriated by the author of Numbers 30 from the Aramaic legal vocabulary might suggest as much. Or, was there an increase in religiosity affecting women, so that men were more often left holding the bag for the commitments of their wives and daughters? In this connection, one wonders if the term *ʾissār/ʾesār* might be a way of designating a written contract of devotion applicable to temple transactions such as are envisioned in Leviticus 27. It is to be assumed that not only men but also women vowed donations in silver in the equivalent of a fixed evaluation of human worth, as well as making donations of real property and chattels to the temple. In earlier times, such devotions, conveyed by the verb *hiqdîš* "to dedicate," were most likely made orally, in a manner similar to vows. With the spread of written legal documents in the postexilic period, what had been a verbal process became increasingly a written one. To establish a symmetry between the vow, a blatantly oral act, and the written contract of devotion, the author of Numbers 30 created a legal composite: One would take an oath to devote objects of value to the temple, and the actual transaction would then be sealed by a written contract.

COMMENT 2:
ORALITY, LITERACY AND THE FUNCTION OF WRITTEN DOCUMENTS

Literacy was relatively late in coming to biblical culture. When seals and bullae bear inscriptional content we may presume literacy, but when they are only figurative, no such expectation is to be assumed. The spread of literacy eventually invested written documents and signatures of various sorts with authority, but it is clear that conceptually, the authority of the spoken word was never fully relinquished or replaced, especially not in the judicial context where oral statements continued to be required. What happened was that the function of the written document changed from that of a memorandum, or record, to serving as an actual legal instrumentality (Lemaire 1992, in *ABD* VI:999–1008). Similarly, acceptance of a written prophecy or message between humans as authoritative represents a later development, first encountered, outside Torah literature, in the near exilic period. It is in 2 Kings 22 that we read of a document (*sēper*) found in the Jerusalem Temple, whose contents were authenticated by a contemporary prophetess, Huldah, and thereupon accepted as authoritative. References to the authoritative *megillāh* "scroll" containing a divine message begin in Jeremiah 36, and continue through Ezekiel 2–3, to postexilic Zechariah 5.

Torah literature projects authoritative written documents at an earlier period, and this is most explicit in Deuteronomy, although not necessarily in core Deuteronomy. References to written *tôrāh* "instruction, teaching" seem to be concentrated in several key chapters (Deuteronomy 17, 27–28), and in the first eleven chapters of the book, and may, therefore, speak for late seventh century B.C.E. Judah rather than for the eighth century in northern Israel. Then, of course, we have references to presumably inscribed *maṣṣēbôt* "stelae" and the stone tablets of the covenant (Exod 24, 32, 34, and cf. Deut 4, 9–10), but the dates of these sources may also be later than previously thought. Biblical law and literature also provide limited information about binding written agreements enacted between individual persons. First off, we encounter the bill of divorce, legislated in Deuteronomy 24:1–4. Given proper grounds, a man who decides to divorce his wife must write out "a bill of separation (*sēper kerîtût*)" and transmit it to her. In Jeremiah 32:6–14, we read of a written deed drawn up by the prophet Jeremiah, who purchased the field of his uncle, Hanamel, under the laws of redemption. That narrative is the most explicit description of a private legal document available in the Hebrew Bible. It refers to the signatures of witnesses, to the provisions (*ḥūqqîm*) of the document, to its open and sealed parts, to its deposit in an archive for preservation and so forth. One notes that in the JE account of Numbers 11 there is reference to a written register of elders, one that presumably bore a degree of authority (see Notes to Num 11:26; Levine 1993:325–326).

It is significant, however, that neither the Book of the Covenant (Exod 19–23) or the primary laws of Deuteronomy (Deut 12–16, 18–26) ever refer to an authoritative private document except for the bill of divorce mentioned in Deuteronomy 24. Laws are promulgated orally by God through Moses, and even the Ten Commandments, projected as written in Exodus 24, are not so projected in Exodus 19. It is logical to conclude that even after authoritative written documents became current in biblical Israel, it was often customary to attribute great authority to the spoken word. Thus, while it is probable, for example, that the laws of the Book of the Covenant were executed in written form, as their composition clearly reflects, their authority was not so attributed.

In priestly literature, which there is reason to assign to an even later period than 2 Kings or Jeremiah, the power of the spoken word is still everywhere in evidence. True, Moses was shown the blueprint for the Tabernacle atop the mountain (Exod 25:40), but he never writes down any specifications of the construction of the Tabernacle, and even the tallies of materiel received for this project, which clearly reflect the formulation of written records (Levine 1965), are never presented as such. Uniformly, God speaks to Moses, and sometimes to the Israelites and to Aaron, the priest, and orally communicates all commandments and prescriptions. The only explicit references to authoritative written documents in the priestly literature of the Torah are the following: (1) Numbers 5:11–31—the priest administering the ordeal to the wife suspected of infidelity writes down the pertinent curses on a document (*séper*), which is then placed in water, so that the ink dissolves; (2) Exodus 39:30 mentions that the diadem of the High Priest bore an inscription which read: *qōdeš le-YHWH* "consecrated to YHWH"; and (3) Exodus 31:18 is a postscript of priestly authorship that links the priestly content of Exodus 25–31 to what immediately follows, and in so doing resonates with Exodus 24 in referring to the written tablets.

There were other currents at work, primarily the spread of literacy and the need for documentation in the new imperial setting of the Achaemenid administration, that enhanced the power of the written word. As we would expect, this is particularly evident in Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles, and in postexilic interpolations found in the prophets and in the Books of Kings. There, we once again encounter widespread reliance on authoritative documents, most notably the written Torah. A key term is *ḥūqqîm* "statutes," from the root *ḥ-q-q* "to incise, inscribe," that predicates a written form. One is obliged to obey *ḥūqqîm* because they were, in the first instance, written. Like the *megillāh* "scroll" and the authoritative *sēper* "document," the concept of *ḥōq* was most likely introduced in the near-exilic period, and is prominent in the writings of the Deuteronomist. It is also dominant in some of the priestly writings of the Torah, where we encounter the feminine form *ḥuqqāh*.

A close reading of Zechariah 1:1–6 brings out the contrast between oral prophecy and written statutes, *ḥūqqim*. In statements assigned to the second year of Darius, 520 B.C.E., the prophet undertakes to explain the causes of both the Judean exile and the restoration. God had become enraged at the ancestors of the returning Judeans who had failed to heed the words of the prophets, sent to admonish them to abandon their evil ways and deeds and to return to their God. They were consequently sent into exile. Do not act in the same way, says the prophet to his listeners, and he chides them:

> "Your ancestors—where are they? And as for the prophets—will they live forever? But my statutory dicta (*debāray weḥūqqay*) which I commanded my servants, the prophets—did they not overtake your ancestors? They then repented and acknowledged: 'As YHWH of Hosts had planned to do to us according to our ways and deeds, so, indeed, did he do to us!' "

And yet, the priestly writers were, by and large, romantically attracted to what they perceived to have been the oral culture of the Wilderness Period, when God had communicated to Moses a plethora of laws and commandments orally. They normally fail to provide for the mechanism of writing even when legislating complex administrative procedures involving calculations and transfers such as those ordained in Leviticus 25 and 27. But there were exceptions where a more realistic mode predominated. Working at a time when written contracts were widely used, the author of Numbers 30 appropriated a contemporary Aramaic term *ʾesār*, and adapted it to the votive system of oral statements of pledge. He did so by constructing an oath-sanctioned binding agreement, thereby realizing the nexus of oath and contract, as well as creating a symmetry between vows and contracts: Both were initiated verbally.

The nexus of oath and contract requires further clarification. It was mentioned above that the only oath on record explicitly taken by a woman is that of the wife suspected of infidelity (Numbers 5). In that instance, the relevant oath is termed *ʾālāh* "execration," a term of diverse connotations, but one that has much in common with Hebrew *šebūʿāh* "oath" (Num 5:21, Neh 10:30). In effect, the *ʾālāh* contains the admonitions or threats of a covenant or contract and the penalties attached to them (Deut 29:13, 18). As we know from royal inscriptions and treaties, these curses were usually written into the relevant document or inscription, and thereby promulgated. And so, indeed, was done as part of the ordeal of Numbers 5: The priest was to inscribe the curses in a document. It can be suggested that the author of Numbers 30 replacing verbal *ʾālāh* "execration" with *šebūʿāh* "oath," and written *berît* "covenant" with *ʾesār* "binding agreement" applied the concept of an oath-sanctioned contract to sacred devotions to the temple such as those projected in Leviticus 27, so as to expand the mechanisms of temple financing.

In any event, it is clear that the vows and obligations incurred by women were viewed as a problem by fathers and husbands, and that what had been inviolable oral commitments on the part of women were now being subjected to the superior legal power of men. Widows and divorcees remained liable for payment of vows and binding agreements, and their economic lot was generally unfortunate. Left without men directly responsible for their support and legal defense, they, like Naomi and Ruth, depended on the good will of sons and brothers, and other close relatives. One imagines that their future lives were seldom as blessed by human kindness, expressed as the *ḥesed* shown by that Judean clan.

Later Jewish tradition, focused in the Tractate *Nedārîm* of the Talmudim, devotes considerable attention to vows and their legal binding power. The demarcation between the vow and the oath tended to be blurred. There was special emphasis on vows of self-affliction, a subject dealt with in Numbers 30:14, especially those pronounced by women. Many examples of this type of women's vows are provided in Mishnah, *Nedārîm*, Chapter 11. Some of these examples are behavioral, most likely motivated by hostility or rebellion, such as a vow taken by a woman not to bathe or adorn herself, or a vow to abstain from certain foods. We also read of women refusing to be of any benefit to their husbands or fathers, or to be benefited by them. One has the impression that relations between husbands and wives, as well as internecine problems within the larger family, often triggered vows by both men and women. Such vows, if they became too extreme, led to inevitable divorce. This would be true, for instance, of a man who vowed not to have sexual relations with his wife in violation of the law of Exodus 21:10–11, or a woman who rebelled against her husband in this regard. In such cases, eventual divorce was required by law (Mishnah, *Ketūbbôt* 5:6–7). Although deriving from a considerably later period, these Talmudic applications may point to enduring by-products of the votive system as an unusual opportunity for the participation of women in religious and family life. It may have served women as an instrument of maneuverability in an otherwise restricted personal existence. In turn, the oath-sanctioned contract may have served women as an instrumentality for disposing of whatever property they possessed or controlled, and for that reason would have to be restricted by priestly law. The connection with Leviticus 27 and its code of temple gifts is particularly suggestive in this regard.

PART VIII.

NUMBERS 31: THE MIDIANITE WAR

◆

INTRODUCTION

Numbers 31 is a priestly account of a war with the Midianites. It is presented as the very battle that God commanded Moses and the Israelites to undertake so as to avenge Israel against the Midianites for their role in the Baal Peor incident (Num 25:16–18). In the Introduction to the Book of Numbers (Levine 1993:94–95), it was explained that otherwise unrecorded enmity between the Israelites and the Midianites was introduced by priestly writers into the record of the Wilderness Period so as to lay a foundation in the Pentateuchal prehistory of Israel for the actual battles fought between Israelites and Midianites during the premonarchic period of settlement. These writers did not find existing accounts of hostile relations with the Midianites in JE, as they did regarding other groups, including the Amalekites, Canaanites and the Transjordanian peoples—Ammon, Moab and Edom. Consequently, they extended the scope of the Baal Peor incident, originally cast as an encounter with the Moabites, to include the Midianites, as well.

To be specific, the priestly writers introduced the Midianites into the confrontation between Balak, the Moabite king, and the Israelites (Num 22:4, 7), and then, saying no more about them in the Balaam Pericope, resumed this agenda by involving the Midianites once again, alongside the Moabites, in their addendum to the Baal Peor episode (Num 25:6–15). This, in turn, occasioned the command to wage war against them (Num 25:16–18). By means of such editorial strategies, and through the present account of the Midianite war waged before the Israelites crossed the Jordan, the priestly writers saw to it that Torah literature anticipated the actual historical battles between the Israelites and the Midianites of which we read in Judges 6–8.

The present priestly account of the Midianite war also provided the opportunity to promulgate a code of law governing allocation of the spoils of war, including their partial devotion to the Temple and its cult, a widespread practice in the ancient Near East. In this connection, Numbers 31 gives expression to priestly notions of the *ḥērem* "ban, proscription" (although this term is not used), by ordering the condemnation of enemy populations and their possessions. Representing a thoroughly priestly agenda, Numbers 31 requires specific forms of purification following military campaigns. These themes, which are of considerable interest in social, economic and religious terms, will be discussed in the Comments.

The contents of Numbers 31, entirely attributable to P, may be outlined as follows:

1) Numbers 31:1–12: The account of the Israelite-Midianite war. This military campaign was undertaken to avenge Israel for the insidious actions of the Midianite women in the Baal Peor incident. (Numbers 25). An

equal quota of fighting men was deployed from each of the twelve tribes of Israel in order to constitute a combined military force. The Israelites won the battle; they took many captives and extensive spoils, killed the kings of Midian, and destroyed the Midianite towns and settlements.

2) Numbers 31:13–20: The laws of war as applied to the Midianite campaign. Moses became enraged at the military commanders for sparing the lives of all captive Midianite women. Captive women who had experienced carnal relations with men were to be put to death along with all male young children. Only female children and virginal women were to be spared. In this connection, all Israelites who had slain any person, thereby having contact with a corpse, were required to undergo ritual purification according to the basic regimen set forth in Numbers 19. All clothing and wooden objects worn or carried by the fighting men had to be purified before they could be used again.
3) Numbers 31:21–54: The disposition of the spoils. Numbers 31:21–24 prescribe that objects of the sort normally susceptible to ritual contamination that were taken as spoils of war had to be purified before they could be used by Israelites. Metal objects capable of withstanding fire were to be plunged into fire, and sprinkled with the water of lustration (*mê niddāh*), and other objects were to be purified by immersion in water before having the water of lustration sprinkled on them. Those attending to such purification rites were, themselves, required to undergo purification, having become contaminated in the process. The system reflected in Numbers 31 acknowledged two kinds of spoils: (1) Plunder (sometimes referred to in Hebrew as *baz*) that individual fighting men seized for themselves in the field, and that they would normally retain as their own. This practice is referred to in Numbers 31:32, 53 as regards the fighting men, and in Numbers 31:48–54 as regards the more valuable plunder seized individually by the chieftains, which they proceeded to donate to the Sanctuary, and (2) Spoils of war, including captives, designated *malqôaḥ* "the take" (also *šālāl* "spoils"), namely, what the commanders of thousands and hundreds, and the heads of the community (*ʿĕdāh*) had taken en masse, and that would be disposed of as collective property. It is this category which is of concern in Numbers 31:25–47, as listed under two headings: (a) flocks and herds, mules, and human captives (Num 31:26–47); and (b) golden objects and other items taken as spoils (Num 31:48–54). Spoils of humans and beasts were to be divided evenly between the men of the fighting force and the rest of the Israelite community. Each allocation was then to be taxed to subsidize the Sanctuary establishment. From the half awarded to the fighting men, one-fifth of one percent (= one

> unit out of five hundred) was to go "to YHWH," which is to say, to the priesthood of the Sanctuary. From the half awarded to the people, one-fiftieth, or two percent, was to go to the Levites who maintained the Sanctuary. The text then continues with an inventory of the spoils of humans and beasts. For the half that came from the fighting men, we are given a precise computation of the taxes according to the basis stated. For the half that came from the rest of the community, there is a more general statement that one-fiftieth had been allocated to the Levites, as ordained. Finally, the text (Num 31:48–54) records that the military commanders donated all of the golden objects they, themselves, had looted to the Sanctuary as a memorial, totaling 16,750 gold shekels.

The section comprising Numbers 31:32–54 may be reconstructed as a balanced, two-dimensional account in a manner similar to what has been done with the data provided in Numbers 7:12–88 (see Levine 1993:259–266, "How Temples Kept Records"). The resulting graph will be presented in the Comments as Figure 1, and the translation will reflect this format.

TRANSLATION

31 [1]YHWH spoke to Moses as follows:

[2]Exact the vengeance of the Israelites from the Midianites, and then you will be gathered to your kinsfolk.

[3]Thereupon Moses spoke to the people as follows: "Deploy from your midst men for military service, and let them move against the Midianites to inflict YHWH's vengeance against the Midianites.

[4]"A thousand from each tribe; a thousand from each tribe, from all the tribes of Israel, shall you dispatch to military service."

[5][Accordingly], there were mustered from the clans of Israel a thousand from each tribe; twelve thousand men, girded for military service.

[6]Then Moses dispatched them to military service, a thousand from each tribe; they, together with Phinehas, son of Eleazar, the priest, to military service, bearing the sacred vessels and the trumpets for sounding.

[7]They waged a military campaign against the Midianites, as YHWH had commanded Moses, and slew all of the males.

[8]And as well, they slew the kings of Midian together with their slain men, 'Evi, Rekem, Tsur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian; and Balaam, son of Beor, they also slew with the sword.

[9]The Israelites captured the wives of the Midianites and their young chil-

dren, and all of their beasts and all of their livestock, and plundered all of their wealth.

[10]And all of their towns in their areas of settlement, and all of their enclosures they set afire.

[11]They seized all the spoils and all the take in both of humans and animals.

[12]They brought to Moses and to Eleazar, the priest, and to the entire Israelite community the captives and the take in spoils, to the encampment in the Plains of Moab, which is located at the Jordan near Jericho.

[13]Moses and Eleazar, the priest, and all of the chieftains of the community went to meet them outside the encampment.

[14]Then Moses became enraged at the commanders of the military forces, the officers of thousands and the officers of hundreds, those returning from the military campaign.

[15]Moses said to them: "Have you spared the lives of any of the females?

[16]"They are the very ones who were detrimental to the Israelites in the Balaam affair, by instigating sacrilegious rebellion against YHWH in the Peor incident, so that a plague struck the community of YHWH.

[17]"Now, then, kill off every male among the young children, and kill off, as well, every woman who has known a man through lying down with a male.

[18]"But you may spare for yourselves all the young children among the females, [and those] who have not known lying down with a male.

[19]"As for you, you must then remain outside the encampment for seven days. And as for anyone who has taken a human life, or anyone who [otherwise] had contact with a corpse—you must purify yourselves on the third day and on the seventh day, you and your captives.

[20]"Furthermore, you must purify yourselves [with respect to] any clothing, or leather garment, or anything made of goatskin, or any wooden vessels."

[21]Then Eleazar, the priest, said to the fighting men who had come to do battle: "This is the statute of the prescribed instruction that YHWH commanded Moses:

[22]" 'Gold and silver, copper and iron, tin and lead—

[23]" 'any material that can endure fire, you must plunge into fire so that it may be purified; and moreover, it must undergo purification by means of the water of lustration. But, any material that cannot withstand fire, you must immerse in water.

[24]" 'You must launder your clothing on the seventh day and thereby become pure. Only afterward may you reenter the encampment.' "

[25]YHWH instructed Moses as follows:

[26]Make a head count of the take of captives, both of humans and beasts; you, together with Eleazar, the priest, and the heads of the patriarchal [houses] of the community.

[27]You shall split the take in half between those who bore arms in the war,

who went to war as part of the military force, and between the rest of the community.

[28]You shall raise an impost for YHWH from the fighting men, who went to war as part of the military force, consisting of one body from five hundred, [to be raised] from humans, and from cattle, and from mules, and from flocks.

[29]You shall take [this] from their half share and deliver it to Eleazar, the priest, as a contribution to YHWH.

[30]And from the half share assigned to the Israelite people you shall appropriate one unit out of fifty, from humans, and from cattle, and from mules, and from flocks, of all species of animals, which you shall then deliver to the Levites, who are charged with the maintenance of YHWH's Tabernacle.

[31]Moses and Eleazar, the priest, did as YHWH had commanded Moses.

[32]The take, in excess of the spoils plundered [individually] by the men of the fighting force, announced to: Flocks—675,000;

[33]Cattle: 72,000.

[34]Mules: 61,000.

[35]Humans: From the women who had never experienced lying with a male: Total of humans: 32,000.

[36]The half, consisting of the share of those who were part of the fighting force, amounted to: Flocks in the number of 337,500.

[37]The impost to YHWH from flocks amounted to six hundred seventy-five.

[38]And of cattle: 36,000, and their impost to YHWH: seventy-two.

[39]And of mules: 30,500, and their impost to YHWH: sixty-one.

[40]And humans: 16,000, and their impost to YHWH: thirty-two persons.

[41]Moses delivered the impost [comprising] the contribution to YHWH, to Eleazar, the priest, as YHWH had commanded Moses.

[42]And from the half share of the Israelite people, which Moses had split off from the fighting men—

[43]the half share of the community from the flocks: 337,500.

[44]And cattle: 36,000.

[45]And mules: 30,500.

[46]And humans: 16,000.

[47]Moses took from the half share of the Israelite people one unit out of fifty, from humans and from beasts, which he delivered to the Levites, charged with the maintenance of YHWH's Tabernacle, as YHWH commanded Moses.

[48]The commanders in charge of the thousand-man fighting units, the officers of thousands and the officers of hundreds, then approached Moses.

[49]They said to Moses: "Your servants have mustered the fighting men under our command and no one is missing.

[50]"We are presenting as the offering for YHWH what each man found, [the following] articles of gold: armlets, bracelets, signet rings, earrings, and pendants to serve as ransom for our lives, in the presence of YHWH."

[51]Moses and Eleazar, the priest, accepted the gold from them, all kinds of wrought articles.

[52]The sum of gold from the contribution which they raised for YHWH was 16,750 shekels, from the officers of thousands and the officers of hundreds.

[53]The fighting men plundered spoils, every man for himself.

[54]Moses and Eleazar, the priest, accepted the gold from the officers of thousands and the officers of hundreds and had it brought to the Tent of Meeting, as a reminder of the Israelite people in the presence of YHWH.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 31:1–12: THE MILITARY ENGAGEMENT

1–2. *Exact the vengeance of the Israelites.* The cognate-accusative syntax, whereby verbal *n-q-m* is followed by nominal *neqāmāh,* literally means "to avenge the vengeance." This syntax is typical of biblical usage (Exod. 21:20, Lev 26:25, Jer 46:10, Ezek 24:8, 25:12). The Israelites were to take vengeance "from" (Hebrew *mē'ēt*) the Midianites, conveying the nuance of retribution. On idiomatic *ne'esāp 'el 'ām-* "to be gathered to one's kinsfolk," see the Notes to Numbers 20:24; Levine 1993:494.

3. *"Deploy from your midst men for military service."* Hebrew and the Semitic languages know two roots, both expressed as *ḥ-l-ṣ:* (1) *ḥ-l-ṣ* I—"to squeeze, press, extract, remove, extend," cognate with Akkadian *ḫalāṣu* (CAD *H*:40), and (2) *ḥālaṣ* II—"to gird," hence "to arm." The latter, *ḥālaṣ* II, would appear to be a denominative of *ḥalāṣayim* "loins, midsection," cognate with Akkadian *ḫanṣatu* (CAD *H*:81). Thus, soldiers termed *ḥālûṣ, halûṣîm* were "girded" for battle, parallel to the sense of Hebrew *ḥamūššîm* (Exod 13:18, Judg 7:11, Jos 1:14, 4:12), those "girded" around the *ḥōmeš* "fifth rib." This is where one would often be stabbed in combat (2 Sam 2:23, 3:27, 4:6, 20:10).

The contrast between *ḥālûṣ* as "advanced guard" (Num 32:30, 32, Deut 3:18, Jos 6:7) and *me'assēp* as "rear guard" (Num 10:25, Jos 6:9, 13, Isa 52:12) introduces a degree of confusion, because it suggests that *(he)ḥālûṣ* is derived from *ḥ-l-ṣ* I when it refers to fighting units that are detached and sent ahead of the main body (see the Notes to Num 10:25; Levine 1993:494, and further, Notes to Num 32:17, 20–21). Therefore, use of the Niphal imperative, *hēḥālēṣ,* here and in Numbers 32:17, 20, may be interpreted either as a denominative of *ḥālûṣ* and rendered "deploy armed units from your midst," or as expressing *ḥ-l-ṣ* I, and rendered "detach from your midst." This would approximate the sense of "rescue" expressed by this form in Psalms 60:7, 108:7, Proverbs 11:8, 11:9. Also cf. the Piel in Psalm 116:8: "For you have rescued *(kî ḥillaṣtā)* my person from death."

Although confusion or contamination is possible, and we could legitimately translate *hēḥālēṣ* as "be detached" while at the same time rendering *ḥālûṣ* as "girded," it would be preferable to retain consistency and translate, as we have, all given forms as reflecting the girding of fighting men. This seems to be the more usual sense of *ḥālaṣ* in certain Aramaic dialects (Levine 1970:345–346).

The term *ṣābā'*, here translated "military service," is explained in the Notes to Numbers 1:3 (Levine 1993:134). Depending on the immediate context, Hebrew *ṣābā'* can connote (a) military service or a military campaign, (b) a military unit, or (c) some other kind of workforce. Here, as the Israelites prepare to go to war, a military connotation is surely indicated.

"and let them move against the Midianites"

The Hebrew *weyihyû ʿal* "and let them move against" resonates with the Aramaic idiom *hawô ʿal Yerûšelem* "they have attacked Jerusalem" (Ezra 4:20), and illustrates the influence of Aramaic on the Hebrew style of the priestly writers. In Numbers 31:16, below, the Hebrew *hāyû libenê Yiśrā'ēl* "were detrimental to the Israelites," probably expresses the same nuance, using prepositional *lamed* instead of *ʿal*. Possibly cf. Genesis 42:36: *ʿālay hāyû kūllānāh* "They have all turned against me" (D. Sperling, personal communication).

The more frequent idiom for taking vengeance employs the cognate accusative *n-q-m* + *neqām/neqāmāh* as in Numbers 31:2, just above. But the present idiom, *nātan-neqāmāh*, also occurs. Thus, Ezekiel 25:14: *wenātattî 'et niqmātî* "I shall inflict my vengeance," and Ezekiel 25:17: *betittî 'et niqmātî* "as I inflict my vengeance."

4. "A *thousand from each tribe.*" Division into military units of a thousand is a system known in various biblical traditions (Exod 18:21, 25), and is repeatedly referred to in Numbers 31 itself (Num 31:14, 48, 52, 54), as well as frequently in Chronicles (cf. Aramaic *ryšyn d'lpyn* [= *rē'šîn de'alpîn*] "heads of thousands" in the Aramaic Enoch fragments from Qumran, Cave 4 [Milik: 1976, Plate XXX; Levine 1982:325]).

5. [*Accordingly*], *there were mustered from the clans of Israel.* The basic meaning of the verb *m-s-r* is "to separate, hand over, detach," hence, in the Niphal stem: "to be detached, recruited from-." This verb is exceptionally rare in biblical Hebrew, and is undoubtedly Aramaic in derivation. It only occurs below, in Numbers 31:16, and in the nominal form **msrt* in Ezekiel 20:37. There, the word is vocalized *bemāsōret (habberît)* in the Masoretic text of Ezekiel 20:37. It is usually rendered: "into the bond (of the covenant)," taking the vocalized form *māsōret* to represent syncopated *ma('a)sōret*, from the root *'-s-r* "to bind" (Greenberg 1983:372–373). More probably, consonantal *bmsrt* is to be read as a plural: *bimesōrōt* "in ranks, arrays." With some further corrections and a deletion, Ezekiel 20:37–38 may be read as follows:

> I shall make you pass under the rod, and form you into ranks *(bimesōrōt)* > *of the covenant (habberît)* <. I shall purge you *(ûbārôtî/ʾet kem)* of those who rebel and revolt against me."

The word *habberît* (consonanttal *hbryt*) should be deleted, because it is very likely an imprecise dittography of *ûbārôtî (wbrwty)* "and I shall purge," which begins the following verse. But, even if the word *habberît* is retained as integral, the meaning of *mesōrōt* as "ranks" is decidedly preferable. This theme links Numbers 31:5 to Ezekiel 20:37–38. This interpretation is supported by the occurrence of the term *msrt* in the Aramaic Enoch fragments from Qumran, Cave 4, published and edited by Milik (1976). There it refers to the heavenly stations or "ranks" of the stars. By citing one of the passages from the Aramaic Enoch passages, it will become clear that by means of a military-celestial transaction, by which the array of forces on earth is transferred to the heavenly hosts, we find some of the same terminology as we have in Numbers 31, there applied to the stars in their courses. Thus, we read in 4Q Enastr. B 28, in an unfortunately broken passage: "with regard to all their stations *(lkl msrthwn)* . . . chiefs of thousands *(rʾšyn dʾlpyn)* . . . dividing the days." Also note 4Q En-c 1, I: "in the stations of their lights *(bmswrt [nh] wryhwn)*." It emerges that Enochic texts resonate the emblematic imagery of Numbers in the celestial realm. As will be noted in the Comments, the *War Scroll* from Qumran resonates the same imagery on the terrestrial level, and in a military context (Levine 1982; see Notes to Num 2:2; Levine 1993:146–148).

6. That the war was commanded by God is emphasized by the presence of Eleazar, the priest, who goes into battle with the troops bearing sacred vessels. It should be noted that Deuteronomy, in the section on the laws of war, envisions the priest as charging the Israelite forces before battle, when he would also grant exemptions from military service (Deut 20:1–9). It is not clear in the present verse what is meant by *kelê haqqōdeš* "the sacred vessels." Perhaps reference is to the Urim and Thummim mentioned in Numbers 27:21, where we read that Eleazar, the priest, was to make oracular inquiry in order to determine when the Israelites were to go to war (see Notes to Num 27:21). On the manufacture and functions of the trumpets (Hebrew *ḥaṣōṣerôt*), see the Notes to Numbers 10:1–10; Levine 1993:305–306.

7. The verbal form, *ṣābāʾ* "to wage a military campaign, to do battle," is denominative of *ṣābāʾ* "a unit of personnel, a military force" (see above, in Notes to Num 31:3). The denominative form is used quite extensively by the priestly writers to characterize the functions of sanctuary personnel, men and women (Exod 38:8—*haṣṣōbeʾōt* "the working women, and cf. 1 Sam 2:22), as well as of fighting men (see below, in Num 31:42, and cf. Num 4:23, 8:24). In the military mode, verbal forms also occur elsewhere in biblical literature (Isa

29:7–8, 31:4, Zech 14:12), and note the Hiphil *hiṣbîʾ* "to muster forces" in 2 Kings 25:19, Jer 52:25.

8. *together with their slain men.* Prepositional *ʿal* often means "in addition to, together with" in priestly texts (Num 6:20, 9:11, 15:5, 9, 28:10). The derivation of the names of the five kings of Midian has been elucidated with great insight by E. A. Knauf, whose earlier findings in his German monograph *Midian* (Knauf 1988) are now conveniently summarized, with bibliography, in *ABD*, under the entries for each of the names: Evi (*ABD* II:677–678), Hur (*ABD* III:334), Reba (*ABD* V:628–629), Rekem (*ABD* V:665), and Zur (*ABD* VI:1175–1176). The same list, including the name of Balaam as one having been slain along with the leaders of Midian, recurs in Joshua 13:21–22. On the individual personal names, note the following: (a) Hebrew *ʾĒwî(ʾwy)* has parallels in Phoenician-Punic, Safaitic and Syriac, and may derive from a verb meaning "to seek shelter, refuge," and be taken as an Aphel form, denominative of *nāweh* "sheepfold, dwelling." Thus, the Punic personal name *ʾwyʾbʿl* may mean: "Baal has granted shelter"; (b) Hebrew *Reqem* is matched by Nabataean *Rqmw* (Raqmu), the indigenous name of Petra, and variously, the translation of Kadesh Barnea in the Targum and the Peshitta, a translation also reflected in Talmudic tradition; (c) Hebrew *Ṣûr* means "rock, cliff." This king is the father of Kozbi, the woman involved in the Baal Peor incident, in its priestly version (Num 25:15). 1 Chronicles 8:30, 9:36 refer to a certain Zur, a contemporary of Saul's father, Kish. The name also occurs in Phoenician, and may be preserved in the toponym Khirbet Ḍor in North Arabia; (d) Hebrew *Ḥûr*, probably expressing the name of the Egyptian god Horus, is a known component of personal names in Ugaritic, Phoenician and Aramaic, and may account for the Nabataean toponym *Ḥauraʾ*, present-day al-Humaymak. Several Israelites bore this name; and (e) Hebrew *Rebaʿ* is most probably a toponym, probably to be identified with Naqb Rubaʿi, located on an access route to Petra.

The upshot of the above analysis of the names of the five Midianite kings is, as Knauf has suggested, that we have the refraction of an itinerary through North Arabia and Transjordan that was in use during the Persian Period, most notably a Nabataean trade route. It is quite common for place-names to be appropriated as personal names. Thus, the names of the daughters of Zelophehad derive mostly from names of districts or towns in the region of Samaria. See Notes to Numbers 26:33, 27:1, and the Comments to Numbers 26 and 27.

and Balaam, son of Beor, they also slew with the sword.

The record makes a point of stating that Balaam was also slain together with the five kings of Midian. On the derivation of the name *Bilʿām*, see the Notes to Numbers 22:5. Both the poetic orations of Balaam and the prose narratives preserved in Numbers 22–24 characterize Balaam approvingly as one who blessed Israel and acknowledged the power of Israel's God. This approbation is shared by the author of Micah 6:5. Here, however, we see the beginning of Balaam's denigration, a process reflected in his identification as "the diviner" (Hebrew *haqqôsēm*) in Joshua 13:22, a decidedly negative appellation, and by the implication voiced in Joshua 24:9–10 that Balaam had sought or wished to curse Israel but was forcefully prevented from doing so by the God of Israel (cf. Neh 13:2). Later traditions develop this line of thought further (Baskin 1983), whereas the earlier traditions had regarded Balaam as an heroic figure. See the Comments to the Balaam Pericope, Numbers 22–24.

9. *and plundered all of their wealth.* On forms of the verb *b-z-z* "to loot, gather spoils," see Notes to Numbers 31:32, below. The sense of *ḥayil* in this verse is close to the essential meaning of the term, namely, "wealth, possessions," whereas in Numbers 31:14, below, context favors the meaning "military force."

10. *And all of their towns.* The structure and character of the biblical *ʿîr* "town" will be discussed in the Notes to Numbers 35:2, and in the Comments to Numbers 35, all in the context of laws governing the establishment and administration of the towns of asylum *(ʿārê miqlāṭ)*. The syntax of the present verse suggests that the Hebrew *bemôšebōtām* "in their settlements" refers to areas or territories of settlement. The term *mōšābōt* "settlements" is most frequently employed by priestly writers and their disciples in 1 Chronicles 4:33, 6:39, 7:28. It serves to suggest the nomadic environment projected in the priestly depiction of the Wilderness Period. The present verse is reminiscent of Ezekiel 6:6: "In all of their areas of settlement *(bekol môšebōtām)* the towns *heʿārîm)* shall be laid waste" (also cf. Ezek 6:37, 37:23). Hebrew *ṭîrah* seems to designate a circular encampment such as was characteristic of the Ishmaelites (Gen 25:16), who dwelled in *ḥaṣērîm* "unwalled settlements" (Levine 1989b: 177, s.v. Lev 25:31). In Psalm 69:26, *ṭîrātām* is parallel with *ʾohālêhem* "their tents" (also cf. Isa 42:11, Ezek 24:5, 1 Chron 6:39). In effect, all three terms, *môšābōt*, *ṭîrōt* and *ḥaṣērîm*, are associated with desert tribes. The circular theme is reflected in the usage of Hebrew *ṭʿîrāh* for round jewelry (Song of Songs 8:9).

11. *They seized all the spoils and all the take.* On the term *malqôaḥ*, literally "take," namely, what is taken, seized, see the Notes to Numbers 31:26, below.

12. *to the encampment in the Plains of Moab.* On the frequent term *mahaneh* "encampment," see Notes to Numbers 2:3; Levine 1993:148. Here, the sense is more precisely "place of encampment."

NOTES TO NUMBERS 31:13–20: THE LAWS OF WAR

13. *Moses and Eleazar, the priest.* The entire postwar operation is conducted by Eleazar, the priest, in conjunction with the heads of the commu-

nity. Here, these are termed *neśîʾê hāʿēdāh* "the chieftains of the community," whereas in Numbers 31:26, below, they are referred to as *rāʾšê ʾabôt hāʿēdāh*, short for *rāʾšê[bāttê] ʾabôt hāʿēdāh* "the heads of the patriarchal ['houses'] of the community." The returning soldiers were greeted outside the encampment because they had yet to undergo the required purification pursuant to contact with the slain in battle. See below, in Numbers 31:21, and following.

14. *at the commanders of the military forces.* In context, the Hebrew construction *peqûdê heḥayil* must mean "commanders of the military forces," because the verse goes on to specify who is intended, namely, the commanders of thousands and hundreds. But the passive participial form *peqûdîm* elsewhere connotes the "musters," referring to the deployed units, themselves, not their commanders (see Notes to Num 1:19, 21; Levine 1993:139). Either the present usage of *peqûdê heḥayil* is conceded to be imprecise, or we should vocalize *peqîdê heḥayil* "the officers in charge of the military forces," reading consonantal *pqydy* instead of Masoretic *pqwdy*, in light of the frequent confusion of *waw* and *yod*. This would yield the plural construct of a participial form, *pāqîd* "appointee, officer in charge." Thus, 2 Kings 25:19: "And from the town he recruited a certain palace guard who served as officer in charge of the fighting men *(ʾašer hûʾ pāqîd ʿal ʾanšê ḥammilḥāmāh)*" (also cf. Judg 9:28, Jer 20:1, 52:25). On the usage of the term *ḥayil* "force, military force" see Notes to Numbers 24:18.

15. *"Have you spared the lives of any of the females?"* The translation takes the verbal form, consonantal *hḥyytm*, as the Piel interrogative, as if vocalized *ha-ḥiyyîtem* "Have you spared, allowed to live?" instead of Masoretic *haḥiyyîtem*, which would represent the Hiphil indicative "You have spared, allowed to live." Thus, *NJPS*: "You have spared every female." Although the Hiphil can have the sense of sparing (as below, in Num 31:18, and in Num 22:23, Jos 2:13, 6:25), more often it is the Piel that connotes "sparing, allowing to live" (cf. Exod 1:17–18). In a strikingly similar context, we read in Judges 21:14: *hannāsîm ʾašer ḥiyyû minnešê Yābēš Gilʿād* "the women whom they had spared from the women of Jabesh Gilead" (see the Comments, and cf. Deut 20:16, Jos 9:15). We would understand the text as follows: After Moses had become enraged at the commanders, he posed a rhetorical question, and then followed it up by explaining his concerns. As for the Hebrew *kol neqēbāh*, it can mean either "every female," or "any female."

16. *They are the very ones who were detrimental to the Israelites.* As suggested in the Notes to Numbers 31:3, above, *hāyû libenê Yiśrāʾēl* expresses the same nuance as *hāyāh ʿal* "to move against."

"by instigating sacrilegious rebellion"

There is no need to emend the verse from *limsor maʿal*, which is unique, to read *limʿōl maʿal* "to commit sacrilege," reflecting the cognate accusative so frequently attested (Num 5:6, Ezek 14:13), although there is no objection to doing so. The Masoretic reading resonates with the usage in Numbers 31:5, above, where the verb *māsar* is explained. As it stands, *limsor ma'al* would mean "to array forces in sacrilegious rebellion." The cultic term *ma'al* "sacrilege, misappropriation of sanctuary property," took on the more general sense of rebellion against God's commandments (Jos 22:22, Ezek 14:13, Ezra 9:4, 10:6, 1 Chron 9:1, and see Levine 1989b:30, s.v. Lev 5:15; Milgrom 1991:319–331).

17. *"every woman who has known a man."* A woman who has had intercourse with a man is referred to as *yōda'at 'îš* "who has known a man," reflecting the sexual nuance associated with the Hebrew verb *y-d-'* "to know, experience" (Gen 4:1, 24:16, 1 Kings 1:4). The construction *lemiškab zākār* "through lying down with a male" describes vaginal penetration of a female by a male (Olyan 1995). It expresses an Aramaistic morphology, in which infinitival forms of the simple stem exhibit the preformative *mem*. An example is Genesis 1:16: *lememšelet hayyôm* "for governance of the day."

The present rule affecting virginal women, which is further clarified in the following verse, Numbers 31:18, occurs almost verbatim in Judges 21:11–12, in a passage reporting on the disposition of captives taken by the Israelite tribes in a punitive war against the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead:

> "This is the thing you must do: Every male, and every woman who has known the lying down of a male shall you condemn. They then found from among the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead four hundred virginal women who had not known a man through the lying down of a male."

This passage refers explicitly to the *ḥērem* "ban" through use of the verb *taḥarîmû* "shall you condemn." The ban was there directed against fellow Israelites, not, as here, against external enemies. The present priestly rule of Numbers 31:17–18 does not refer directly to the *ḥērem*, but its provisions are predicated upon it. More will be said on this subject in the Comments. It suffices to point out here that the priestly laws of war derive from earlier views on warfare presented in the conquest traditions of the Hebrew Bible, most emphatically in Deuteronomy, and in the writings of the Deuteronomist, whose tracks can be traced to the battle record in Judges 21.

18. *"all the young children among the females."* Hebrew *ṭap* hardly fits the sense of virginal women, and seems always to refer to prepubescent children. One assumes that *wekol haṭṭap bannāšîm* in the present verse is symmetrical with *kol zākār baṭṭāp* "all the males among the young children" in the previous verse 17, and that it means "all female young children." Perhaps add conjunctive *waw* and read: *wa'ašer lō' yāde'û* "[And] those who have not known-," thereby creating a second category, that of postpubescent women who were still virgins. This is the effect of the given translation. An alternative would be to assume haplography, on which basis the text should read: *wekol haṭṭap*

bannāšîm, [wenāšîm] 'ašer "-and all female young children, [and women] who-." In any event, the verse does not read smoothly as is, although the sense is fairly clear.

19. *"you must purify yourselves."* On the Hithpael of the verb *ḥāṭā'*, here the second person masculine plural, *titḥaṭṭe'û* "you must purify yourselves," see the Notes to Numbers 19:12 (Levine 1993:465–466), where the present passage is referred to in considerable detail. It is to be regarded as a direct application of the rites of purification ordained in Numbers 19 for any Israelite who has had contact with a dead body to the specific condition of an Israelite soldier after battle. Such a situation is envisioned in Numbers 19:16, which speaks of any Israelite who might have contact with a corpse in the open field, such as that of one slain by the sword. This nexus gains even greater force in the provisions of Numbers 31:21–24, below, as will become evident in due course. The requirements of exclusion from the encampment for seven days and of purification on the third and seventh day are likewise applications of the provisions of Numbers 19.

"you and your captives."

The Hebrew *šebî* "captivity" has collective force, referring to the group of captives (see Notes to Num 21:1). The point here is that captives who fought and killed, and therefore had contact with the slain, were barred from the Israelite encampment in the same way as Israelites awaiting purification due to other causes.

20. *"Furthermore, you must purify yourselves."* This statement is pursuant to the provisions of the previous verse regarding the purification of fighting men and adds the requirement that their garments must also be purified, undoubtedly by the appropriate method of cleansing. As such, the present verse anticipates Numbers 31:24, below. Of course, one could interpret this verse as applying to spoils, rather than to the fighting men, but that is unlikely.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 31:21–54: THE DISPOSITION OF THE SPOILS OF WAR

21. Idiomatic *habbā'îm lammilḥāmāh* "who had come to do battle," instead of the more frequent expression "to go out to war" with the verb *yāṣā'*, is paralleled in Numbers 32:7 (see Notes to Num 10:9; Levine 1993:306, and Notes to Num 32:7). This section pertains to the purification of spoils of war made of metal. The formula *zō't ḥūqqat hattôrāh* "This is the statute of the prescribed instruction" occurs only here and in Numbers 19:2, and further links the present provisions to the code of law governing corpse impurity in Numbers 19.

22. Six metals are enumerated here, including the usual "gold" (*zāhāb*) and "silver" (*kesep*), the frequent "copper" (*neḥōšet*), and "iron" (*barzel*) and less frequent "lead" (*ʿōperet*) and "tin" (*bedîl*). With variations, such conventional lists of metals are to be found in Ezekiel 22:18–20, 27:12. The descending scale of value, as well as a concept of the normative descent of time, ranging from gold and silver, through copper and iron, all the way down to clay, are epitomized in the apocalypse of the statue symbolizing the four kingdoms in Daniel 2:32–33. The order is reversed in an ascending scale of value in Daniel 2:35, and the meaning of the vision is then spelled out in Daniel 3:38–45. On the composition of *neḥōšet* "copper," see Notes to Numbers 21:9, within the narrative of the copper serpent. On Hebrew *ʿōperet* "lead," see Exodus 15:10, Jeremiah 6:29, and note the Akkadian cognate, *abāru* (CAD A I:37–38, s.v. *abāru* A). Hebrew *bedîl* "tin" is mentioned in Ezekiel 22:18–20 in a parable on the purging of Israel, and in Ezekiel 27:12 as one of the metals traded by the merchants of Tyre, a subject discussed by Diakonoff (1992). In Zechariah 4:10, there is reference to a plumb line made of tin, instead of the usual lead.

23. " '*any material that can endure fire.*' " Idiomatic *ʾašer yābōʾ bāʾēš*, literally "that can go into fire," is functionally understood as "that can withstand, endure fire," so that it can be withdrawn whole from the fire. This is the imagery of Psalm 66:10–12: "You have weighed us, God; you have refined us as one refines silver . . . we have endured fire and water (*bāʾnû bāʾēš ûbammayim*), and you have brought us through to prosperity." Again we encounter the theme of purging, and, in effect, the procedures here specified for the rites of purification combine fire and water in the process. The Hebrew *heʿebîr bāʾēš* "to pass through, plunge into fire" is used to describe the sacrifice of children in the Molek cult (Deut 18:10, 2 Kings 16:3, 17:17, 21:6, 23:10, Ezek 20:31, 23:37). As noted by M. Smith (1975), the same practice of sacrificing children is elsewhere referred to as *śārap bāʾēš* "to burn in fire" (Deut 12:31, Jer 7:31, 19:5; Levine 1989b:258–260).

As already discussed in the Notes to Numbers 31:19, above, the present procedures derive directly from Numbers 19, the rituals of purification required after contact with a dead body. This is most precisely brought out by usage of the designation *mê niddāh* "water of sprinkling, lustration," which is limited to Numbers 19 and to the present verse. It is explained in the Notes to Numbers 19:9 (I, 463–464). Similar to it is the term *mê ḥaṭṭāʾt* "water of purification" (see Notes to Num 8:7; Levine 1993:274–275). This statement makes it clear that whether fire or water is the agent of cleansing, ritual purification additionally requires application of the water of lustration.

24. " '*You must launder your clothing.*' " The returning soldiers were required to launder their garments. The Hebrew verb, Piel *kibbēs* "to launder," may be cognate with Akkadian *kabāsu* "to trample, crush," also said of fulling

cloth (*CAD K*: 5–11, s.v. *kabāsu, v*; especially note meanings 2 and 4). In such terms, laundering would be expressed as the pounding or beating of clothing. This verbal root is normally realized in biblical Hebrew as *kābaš* "to conquer, subjugate" (Num 32:22, 29, Jer 34:11, 16, Neh 5:5), and in such nominal forms as *kebeš* "ramp" (2 Chron 9:18), and in the noun *kibšān* "furnace" (Gen 19:29, Exod 9:8, 10, 19:18). The fact that Akkadian *kabāsu* (meaning 4) can refer to the pardoning of offenses (literally "suppressing" them) supports this suggestion because Akkadian *kabāsu ša ḥiṭi* "forgiving an offense" parallels biblical Hebrew *yikbōš ʿawōnōtênû* "He will pardon our sins" (Micah 7:19). For the requirement of laundering see further, in Leviticus, chapters 13–16.

25–26. Here begins a major section of Number 31 on the disposition of various types of spoils, beginning with humans and animals (Num 31:25–47). On idiomatic *nāśā' rō'š* "take a poll, head count," see Notes to Numbers 1:2 (I, 130). Here, this idiom is being used to refer to both humans and animals taken "captive." Outside of Numbers 31, the term *malqôaḥ*, literally "take, what is taken, seized" occurs only in Isaiah 49:24–25, in a series of rhetorical questions:

> Can the 'take' be taken away from the warrior, or the captive escape from the victor? But thus says YHWH: Even the warrior's captive will be seized and the 'take' of the despot may flee, even so I will contend with your adversary, and your sons—I will rescue!

In that verse, *malqôaḥ* "take" and *šebî* "captive, captivity" are in parallelism, whereas in the present verse they are in a construct relationship.

27. *You shall split the take in half.* The even division of spoils between the fighting men and the rest of the community recalls the disposition of spoils following a raid on the Amalekites, recounted in 1 Samuel 30:23–25, in words attributed to David in 1 Samuel 30:24: "For the share of those going down to war shall be as the share of those guarding the supplies. They shall share together" (also see Jos 22:8).

In prescribing the basis for disposition of the various types of spoils, Numbers 31 employs ancient Hebrew mathematical terms that will be noted as they occur from here on in. Thus, verbal *weḥāṣîtā* "you shall split . . . in half" relates to *maḥaṣît* in Numbers 31:29–30, 42, 47, and *meḥeṣāh* in Numbers 31:36, 43, below, both of which mean "half." In the present instance, a halving of the spoils is intended, but elsewhere the verb *ḥ-ṣ-h* may also connote splitting in three and even four (Judg 9:43, Dan 11:4).

between those who bore arms in the war,

The term *topese hammilḥāmāh*, literally "those who bear the war," refers to those who bear arms, the actual combatants. The verb *tāpas* "to hold, seize" is occasionally used with special reference to bearing arms like the bow (Jer

46:9, Amos 2:15), and the sword (Ezek 38:4), but may also be said of holding musical instruments (Gen 4:21), a sickle (Jer 50:16), and oars of a ship (Ezek 27:29). What we have is an abbreviated idiom, wherein the verb *tōpēs*, without further specification, implies bearing arms.

The construction *hayyōṣeʾîm laṣṣābāʾ* "who went out (to war) as part of the military force" expresses the idiomatic usage of the verb *yāṣāʾ* "to depart, go out" in the sense of "going out to war." Cf. Deuteronomy 23:10: *kî tēṣēʾ lamilḥāmāh* "When you go out to war." Also cf. the more frequent designation *yōṣēʾ ṣābāʾ* "one eligible 'to go out'—to battle / service" (Num 1:20, passim).

28–29. A tax was to be raised from the fighting men and from the rest of the Israelites on a half-and-half basis. The Hebrew term *mekes* "impost" (feminine *miksāh* in Exod 12:4, Lev 27:23) is cognate with Akkadian *miksu,* a term connoting a tax consisting of a share of the yield, or simply meaning "customs, dues" (*CAD M* II:63–65; Levine 1989b:197, s.v. Lev 27:23). A tax is "raised, levied," an act expressed by the verb *hērîm* "to raise," yielding the noun *terûmāh* "levy, contribution" (Num 5:9, 15:19, Ezek 45:13, and see Levine 1989b: 43, s.v. Lev 7:14, and Notes to Num 5:9 [I, 191, s.v. Num 5:9]). The rule is that spoils taken collectively by the fighting men were to be taxed in support of the Sanctuary and its priesthood. The unique and rather strange construction *ʾeḥād nepeš*, translated "one body," is functionally equivalent to *ʾeḥād ʾāḥūz* "one unit withheld" in Numbers 31:30, just below. From the half of the spoils allocated to the fighting men, in the Hebrew: *mimmahaṣîtām* "from their half-share," one out of five hundred captured humans and animals was to be conveyed to Eleazar and the priests.

29–30. From the "half share" (*maḥaṣît*) of the Israelites, a larger impost, one out of fifty (two percent) was to be remitted to the Levites, who were presumably more numerous. The mathematical term *ʾāḥūz* is limited in the Hebrew Bible to the present chapter (see below, in Num 31:47), and to 1 Chronicles 24:6. In modern Hebrew it is used to mean "percent," namely, one unit out of a hundred. It derives from the verb *ʾāḥaz* "to hold," which is to say "to hold back, withhold," from a larger whole. Thus, the Hebrew *ʾeḥād ʾāḥūz min haḥamiššîm* means, literally "one [unit] withheld from the fifty." This construction alternates with *hāʾāḥūz ʾeḥād* "the amount withheld—one [unit]—" in Numbers 31:47, below.

who are charged with the maintenance of YHWH's *Tabernacle.*

For the formula *šōmerê mišmeret* "charged with the maintenance of—" in referring to the assigned tasks of the Levites, see Notes to Numbers 18:3 (Levine 1993:441), and for the various connotations of the term *mišmeret* itself, see Notes to Numbers 1:53 (I, 141–142).

31. In typically priestly fashion, the text records the compliance of Moses and Eleazar, the priest. The formulation is somewhat stilted, however, because both of the leaders carried out what YHWH had commanded Moses, alone.

Most likely, the standard compliance formula *ka'ăšer ṣiwwāh YHWH 'et Mōšeh* "as YHWH commanded Moses" had become fixed or bound. See below, in Numbers 31:47, and cf. Leviticus 8:17, 21. Note the discussion by Levine (1965a).

32. Beginning here, and continuing through Numbers 31:47, are listed the totals of the spoils, of man and beast, as allocated and distributed, and then taxed. Rather than attempting to deal with totals and percentages here, the data will be presented in a series of graphs (Figure 1), and calculated in detail in the Comments, as was announced in the Introduction to Numbers 31. It cannot be coincidental that just more than 600,000 sheep were taken as spoils, but it is difficult to account for all of the totals.

It was characteristic of ancient Near Eastern records to list animals as flocks and herds, at times adding mules and horses. The masculine form *bāz* "loot, spoils," vocalized with a Qāmēṣ, is unique to this passage. Elsewhere, the masculine form is *baz*, vocalized with a Pataḥ (see Notes to Num 14:3; Levine 1993:362, and cf. Isa 8:1, 10:6), whereas the feminine form is *bizzāh* (Dan 11:24, 33, Esther 9:7, 10, 15–16, 2 Chron 14:13), clearly a later form. The Hebrew *yeter habbāz* "in excess of the spoils" means in excess of what was retained by the fighting men as their own. See below, in Numbers 31:53, where the same is said regarding what the fighting men retained of valuable objects taken as spoils. Hebrew *yeter* "excess, surplus" usually refers to what is left after part of the sum-total has been subtracted. It is a mathematical term, like *'āḥūz* "amount withheld," in Numbers 31:30, just above. Referring to a military force as *'ām* is old Hebrew usage (see Notes to Num 23:9, and Judg 5:2, 9:36–37, and the composite term *'ām hammilḥāmāh* "the fighting force, army" in Jos 8:1, 3, 10:7, 11:7).

35. *From the women who had never experienced lying with a male.* For this method of classifying captive women, see above, in Numbers 31:17–18.

36. Here Hebrew *meḥeṣāh* "half" is used rather than *maḥaṣît* as in Numbers 31:29–30, above, and in Numbers 31:42, 47, below. The construct form *meḥeṣat* "half of—" occurs below, in Numbers 31:43.

41. Here we have the composite term *mekes terûmat YHWH* "the impost [comprising] the contribution to YHWH," resonating Numbers 31:29–30, above. Note the usual compliance formula. Moses reserves what he was ordered to allocate to the priests.

42. We read that Moses had done what he was ordered to do in Numbers 31:27. Note the cognate formulation —*ummimmaḥaṣît* . . . *'ăšer ḥāṣāh*, literally "and from the half share which he halved." On the term *ṣōbe 'îm* "fighting men" see the Notes to Numbers 31:7, above.

47. *as YHWH commanded Moses.* This verse summarizes what had been ordained in Numbers 31:30, above, just as Numbers 31:41 summarizes what was reserved for the priests.

48. *The commanders in charge of.* Here begins the concluding section of Numbers 31, which records what was done with the spoils taken by the commanders, in contradistinction to the arrays of fighting men. On the sense of *happeqūdîm* "the commanders," see Notes to Numbers 31:14, above. This verse is somewhat redundant in referring first to those in charge of thousand-man fighting units and then, in repetition, to commanders of thousands and hundreds.

49. *and no one is missing.* These commanders now report to Moses that a head count had been taken, and that all of the fighting men have been accounted for. Idiomatic *nipqād min*—means "absent, missing, lost" (Judg 21:3, 1 Sam 20:18, 38, 25:7, 21, 2 Sam 2:30). Presumably, this means that no Israelite men were lost in battle.

50. The commanders offer to YHWH their valuable donations. Five types of golden jewelry are enumerated: (1) Hebrew *ʾeṣʿādāh* "armlet" is explained by (1) 2 Sam 1:10: "And I took the crown which was on his head, and the armlet (*weʾeṣ ʿādāh*) which was on his arm and I brought them to my lord, here" (cf. the variant form *ṣeʿādôt* in Isa 3:20); (2) Hebrew *ṣāmîd* "bracelet," derives from the verb *ṣ-m-d* "to attach, bind." It is explained by Ezekiel 16:11: "I will place bracelets (*ṣemîdîm*) on your arms and a pendant (*rābîd*) on your neck" (cf. Ezek 23:42, Gen 24:22, 30, 47). The same term, *ṣāmîd,* may designate a lid used to seal a vessel (see Notes to Num 19:15; Levine 1993:467); (3) Hebrew *ṭaba ʿat* "signet ring," is a term of wide usage in the Hebrew Bible. It is listed as an item of value donated to the Tabernacle, along with kûmāz in Exodus 35:22, and mentioned as an item of jewelry in Isaiah 3:20; (4) Hebrew *ʿāgîl* "earring" is so called because of its round shape. Thus Ezekiel 16:12, "I will place a ring on your face and earrings (*ʿagîlîm*) on your ears"; and (5) Hebrew *kûmāz* "pendant(?)" (Exod 35:22), whose meaning is uncertain. A review of jewelry in biblical Israel is provided by Edwards, 1992 (*ABD* 2, 232–238). These valuable gold items would end up as a *qorbān* "offering," or, in the wording of Numbers 31:54, below, as a memorial or reminder (Hebrew *zikkārôn*) to be deposited in the Sanctuary treasury. On the term *qorbān,* see Notes to Numbers 5:15 (Levine 1993:194; also Levine 1989b:5, s.v. Lev 1:2).

In the formula *lekappēr ʿal napšōtênû* "to serve as ransom (*kōper*) for our lives," the Piel infinitive, *lekappēr,* is a denominative of *kōper* "ransom" (on the term *kōper* see the Notes to Num 35:31–32). It is not direct, ritual expiation that is meant, but rather the notion that certain cultic offerings redeem their donors, because they are accepted by God in place of them, as substitution for their lives. In Exodus 30:15–16, we read that payment of a half-shekel to the Tabernacle will serve as ransom for each Israelite. Exodus 30:12 says as much: "Let them, each person remit the ransom for his life (*kōper napšô*) to YHWH." It is noteworthy that in Numbers 31 the donation of the commanders is announced right after the census of returning soldiers had been completed, and its salutary results reported to the effect that not a single person was missing. God has spared the lives of the combatants, who now owed him their lives (Levine 1974:67–68). The relatedness of Exodus 30:11–16 will be discussed further in the Notes to Numbers 31:54, below.

51. The Hebrew *kelî maʿaśeh* "wrought articles" reflects the sense of the verb *ʿāśāh* as "to work, manufacture." Cf. *maʿaśeh* "product" in Isaiah 3:24, also used with reference to adornments, and see Exodus 26:1.

52. *The sum of gold.* Once again, Hebrew *kol* appears as a technical term for "total." Formulaic *wayyehî kol* is to be translated "the total amounted to—" (see Notes to Num 1:44–47; Levine 1993:140, and Notes to Num 3:43; Levine 1993:162).

53. *every man for himself.* Each warrior took and kept his own spoils. See the Introduction to Numbers 31, and Notes to Numbers 31:32, above.

54. *as a reminder of the Israelite people.* Normally, usage of the Hebrew *zikkārôn* "reminder, memorial" suggests the display of some object as a visual reminder (Exod 13:9, 28:29, Zech 6:14, Isa 57:8), or the celebration of a special occasion as an act of commemoration (Exod 12:14, Lev 23:24). But here and in Exodus 30:16, also a text dealing with cultic donations, and expressing the notion of ransom for life, as has been noted, does the designation *lezikkārôn* seem to refer to an act of cultic devotion that brings the Israelites to the attention of their God, not because it is displayed or noticed, in the usual sense, but because God knows that it has been given. In Numbers 10:9–10, we read that the trumpets will be heard by God with the result that "you will be brought to the attention of your God" (*wenizkartem lipnê ʾelōhêkem*). This is what it means to say, that the trumpets would serve as a *zikkārôn* of the Israelites before God. The same meaning is appropriate here. Because of the cultic devotion of the people and its commanders, the Israelites will be remembered for good by their God.

COMMENTS

Numbers 31 deals with the waging of war, and as such raises basic questions regarding the conduct of war and its stated justifications. It inevitably involves the process of Israelite self-definition, revealing perceptions of the "self" and the "other," a subject prominent in Numbers generally. In the present case, the "other" is represented by the Midianites, a people whose own identity is often unclear in biblical literature. Historical wars with the Midianites, under the leadership of Jerubaal/Gideon, are recounted in Judges 6–8. Those battles are narrated in the context of the early conquest and settlement of Canaan, set in the premonarchic period, although they were probably composed at a later time. Isaiah (9:3) of the late eighth century B.C.E. compares the relief that is imminent from Assyrian oppression to that great victory over Midian; it will be "like the day of Midian" (*keyôm Midyān*), which suggests that the memory of that victory was still very much alive. This historical reference is echoed in Isaiah 10:26, which some consider to be of later provenance, and much later reappears in the exilic or postexilic resonance of Isaiah 60:6. Psalm 83:9–12, in an excerpt from a patently late Psalm, similarly echoes the accounts in Judges 6–8, which evidently served as a dramatic epitome of Israelite triumph. The fact that Genesis 25 and 36 preserve traditions on the Midianites also indicates that they or others designated Midianites were alive in the Israelite-Jewish consciousness of postexilic times.

The Midianite war of Numbers 31 belongs, more precisely, to the prehistory of Israel. It is part of the overall program of Torah literature, which seeks to lay the foundation of the conquest and settlement of Canaan in the Wilderness Period. In this way, the opposition Israelites were to encounter in their new land, and conflicts that would continue to endanger them at various periods, are presaged in the presettlement period. We are being told, in effect, that the peoples with whom the Israelites eventually did battle had been inimical to them even before they actually came into conflict with them in Canaan. The perception that such enmity was endemic served to justify the Israelite wars with them.

In still another dimension, Numbers 31 may well reflect hostilities current at the time this account was written, most likely during the Achaemenid Period. There are in Numbers 31 several linguistic and historical indicators pointing to this period of history, and the challenge of the commentator is to discover the reality lying behind the biblical text; to clarify the *Sitz-im-Leben* of its authors and compilers. Going beyond literary and historical considerations, the commentator is called upon to consider the horrendous tone of Numbers 31 and the war policy it expresses, namely, the *ḥērem*, in its several aspects. In Numbers 31:13–20, we read that Moses was insistent on slaying all married women from among the Midianites in addition to all of the males. That he should have specifically castigated the Israelite leadership for failure to do so projects an extremely harsh posture. Moreover, it is poignant to find, on the one hand, serious concern over purifying Israelite soldiers, and even purifying the spoils of war subsequent to direct contact with the slain, but, on the other hand, no expression of concern over the extent of death itself. The war against the Midianites is presented as one of *neqāmāh* "vengeance," and it bespeaks intense hatred. Numbers 31 also prescribes certain procedures for the recruitment of the Israelite fighting force, and it would be of interest to ascertain how these procedures correlate with other information on this subject in the Hebrew Bible. Finally, the disposition of spoils according to the system set forth in Numbers 31 requires comment. A graph will tabulate the distribution of spoils and their taxation (Figure 1).

COMMENT 1: THE RECRUITMENT OF FIGHTING FORCES IN BIBLICAL ISRAEL

Notwithstanding considerable interest in the subject of warfare in biblical Israel, relatively little has actually been learned about the recruitment and organization of Israelite fighting forces at various periods of Israelite history. More is also known, as a matter of fact, about the waging of war, about weaponry and battle tactics and the besieging of towns. It has been the practice of biblical historians to draw a general distinction between the premonarchic and the monarchic periods on the assumption that once standing armies were organized by the kings of Judah and Israel, the tribal militia system was largely though not completely replaced. As part of the priestly literature of the Torah, Numbers 31 follows, in most respects, the pattern of the early chapters of Numbers in projecting a tribally based militia, recruited and serving under tribal leaders such as *neśî ʾîm* "chieftains," and the heads of "patriarchal clans" (*bāttê ʾābôt*). This is little basis for attributing these traditions to an early period, however, though some, like Mendenhall (1958), have sought to do so. It is more likely that they are attributable to the priestly revival of premonarchic social institutions, heralded in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, where the early history of Israel is recast in romantic terms. A possible giveaway of later provenance is usage of the term *peqūdîm* in Numbers 31:14, 48, which is probably to be read *peqîdîm* "officers in charge." As explained in Notes to Numbers 31:14, this term points to a royal or other bureaucratic establishment rather than to tribal life.

There is ample reason to conclude that Numbers 31 correlates with the military traditions of Chronicles, just as it shows affinities to Ezekiel 40–48 in regard to cultic taxes and donations. Whereas the designation *ʾanšê milḥāmāh* "combatants" is frequent in biblical literature, *ʾanšê sạ̄bạ̄ʾ* "fighting men" of Numbers 31:53 occurs elsewhere only in 1 Chronicles 12:9, and *yōṣēʾ ṣābāʾ*, literally "one who goes out to war as part of the fighting force," which occurs frequently in Numbers 1, and in Numbers 31:27–28, also occurs in 1 Chronicles 5:18, 7:11, 12:33–34, 2 Chronicles 25:5, 26:11, and only there. The fact that an equal, schematic number of fighting men was to be recruited from each tribe also fits in well with the tendency in priestly literature to project equal status for all of the twelve tribes of Israel. According to Numbers 7, all of the tribal chieftains donated the same offerings to the newly built Tabernacle, notwithstanding the great differences in their respective tribal populations.

COMMENT 2: CLASSES OF ENEMIES AND GRADATIONS OF PROSCRIPTION

Numbers 31:13–20 relate, in a style typical of other priestly texts in Leviticus and Numbers, how specific instructions were communicated to the Israelites by God or by Moses, who was at times joined by Aaron. An incident occurred in which the will of God was not fulfilled properly, and the incident, itself, then served as a precedent for issuing new commands aimed at putting things right. In the present case, the Israelite chieftains had not seen to it that all Midianite women who had experienced carnal knowledge with a male, a traditional way of referring to married women, were killed along with all of the males among the enemy. Note that earlier in the account (Num 31:9–10), we were told that the Israelites captured "the Midianite women (*nešê Midyān*) and their children;" they also took spoils, and burned down the Midianite settlements. This general classification intimates that those Midianite women who were married had been spared.

Moses became enraged at the leaders on this account, and issued unmistakable orders that only young virginal women were to be spared. This severity is explained by reference to the invidious role of the Midianite women in the Baal Peor episode. They had lured the Israelites to sacrilegious behavior, bringing down God's wrath on the Israelites. The instructions conclude by requiring that Israelite soldiers who had slain enemies in battle, or who had physical contact with the slain, purify themselves. Their purification was modeled after the elaborate measures set forth in Numbers 19 for all who were contaminated after contact with a corpse. This requirement leaves no room to question the conclusion that the law of Numbers 19 governing corpse contamination made no distinction between Israelites and others. Hence, the corpses of the non-Israelite enemy were also impure. The later Jewish tradition modified this rule, limiting impurity to the Jewish dead (see the Introduction to Num 19; Levine 1993:457, and Notes to Num 19:10; Levine 1993:464–465).

Above, in the Notes to Numbers 31:13–20, the similarity of the present passage to the narrative of Judges 21:1–12, a late interpolation of a patently priestly character, was emphasized. That passage relates that the Israelite tribes wiped out the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead who had violated their oath by failing to answer the call of battle against the Benjaminites. In effect, they applied to those fellow Israelites the law of Numbers 31:13–20, which, for itself, had been aimed at their enemy, the Midianites, sparing only unmarried women, who would eventually be suitable brides for Israelites from other tribes, as the story unfolds. The rule of Numbers 31:13–30 served them well in this regard precisely because it fell short of the severity of the harshest *ḥērem*, as we shall see.

In general, Deuteronomy emerges as the principal Torah source on the subject of warfare and policy toward defeated and conquered peoples. Wherever the Deuteronomist was at work, we are likely to encounter a resonance of the *ḥērem* policy, which is one way of formulating the war policies that were current in biblical Israel. Early on, the Deuteronomist adopts a hostile attitude toward the peoples of Canaan, the group of seven, sometimes listed as six or five, ordering that the *ḥērem* policy be carried out against them (Deut 7:1–11, 17–26). This policy is specific: There are to be no treaties with the peoples of Canaan and no intermarriage with them. Pagan cult sites in the land are to be razed, along with all of their appurtenances, and no spoils of silver and gold are to be taken in the wars of conquest; they are regarded as *toʿebah* "abomination." One who brought such spoils into his home would be condemned; the *ḥērem* would be applied to him! All spoils were to be destroyed, usually in a conflagration.

The practice of the *ḥērem* has been studied most recently by P. Stern (1991, 1993). It pertains, in the first instance, to the disposition of the spoils of war, including towns, property and territory, as well as human spoils. When a policy of *ḥērem* is in force, spoils are effectively denied to the victorious army, to be expropriated by another agency. They might go in part or entirely to the commander, to the king, to the temple or to a deity. In the harshest application of the *ḥērem*, like that which Deuteronomy ordains for the peoples of Canaan, *ḥērem* meant the total destruction of all spoils, including the human population, who would be slain rather than taken captive, otherwise subjugated or deported. This indicates that hatred for the previous inhabitants of the Land of Canaan was more intense than was hostility toward external enemies.

Practices similar to the biblical *ḥērem* have been found to be operative at Mari of the Old Babylonian Period (Malamat 1960), and, in a general way, were known in most ancient Near Eastern societies. Closest in time and space to the biblical practice was that of the Moabite king, Mesha, of the mid-ninth century B.C.E. In fact, since Moabite is a Canaanite language very similar to Hebrew, the terms of reference in the biblical and the Moabite sources are pretty much the same. Most significantly, both employ the Hiphil *heḥerîm* "to proscribe." In several statements, Mesha describes the disposition of conquered Transjordanian Israelite towns and their populations and of the spoils, including Israelite cult objects. Speaking of the town of Nebo in Moab, he reports as follows:

> "Then Kemosh said to me: 'Go occupy Nebo, which belongs to Israel.' So, I proceeded at night and did battle against it from the crack of dawn until noon, and I seized and killed it all, seven thousand men (*gbrn*) and male children (*grn*), and women (*gbrt*) and female children

> (*grt*), and nubile women (*rḥmt*). For, I proscribed it (*hḥrmth*) to Ashtar-Kemosh. I took away from there the [ves]sels of YHWH, and hauled them before Kemosh" (Mesha Stele, lines 14–18; Gibson 1971:75).

Attention to the wording of the above statement will demonstrate just how closely the biblical and the Moabite practices parallel each other. Synonymous with Hebrew *ṭap* "children" is Moabite *grn* (= *gūrin*, masculine) and *grt* (= *gūrōt*, feminine), terms for "the young." In biblical Hebrew, such terms are reserved for animal cubs (Lament 4:3, feminine in Nah 2:13). Moabite *gbrn*, *gbrt* "men, women" are identical with known Hebrew terms, and Moabite *rḥmt* (= *reḥāmōt*) "nubile women" recalls Judges 5:30: "Do they not take and divide spoils; one or two nubile women (*raḥam raḥamatayîm*) as every man's property (*lerōʾs gāber*)?" This category would correspond to women who had not experienced carnal knowledge with a male, as expressed in biblical parlance. Finally, the verb *hḥrmth* (= *haḥaramtîhā*) "I proscribed it (feminine)" is paralleled in any number of biblical statements describing conquest (Num 21:2, Deut 3:6, 13:16, 20:17, 1 Sam 15:9). Closest in formulation is Micah 4:13: "And you will crush the many peoples, and you will proscribe the gain from them to YHWH (*wehaḥaramtî leYHWH biṣʿām*), and their wealth to the Master of all the earth."

It would seem that with respect to the human population, Mesha carried out the most extreme sort of *ḥērem* on the Israelite towns, killing off men, women, unmarried women and children of both sexes. With respect to the towns, themselves, we read further that he often repopulated them with people brought in from elsewhere, which means that he did not raze them. He devoted cultic vessels and probably other precious spoils to his national deity, (Ashtar)-Kemosh. All of this suggests that the practice of the *ḥērem* had a discernibly regional character, and was not a specifically Israelite policy.

The biblical laws of warfare are set forth in Deuteronomy 20–21, where a basic distinction is drawn between "towns that are extremely distant from you; those not of the towns belonging to *these nations* (*ʾašer lōʾ mēʿārê haggōyîm hāʾēleh hēnnāh*)." "*These nations*," as the text goes on to explain, are those "whom YHWH, your God, is granting to you as a *naḥalāh*" (Deut 20:15–16). This is a way of characterizing the peoples of Canaan. With respect to these, the rule is clear: *lōʾ teḥayyeh kol nešāmāh* "You may not spare the life of any person" (Deut 20:15–16). This is the most extreme application of the *ḥērem* policy, and, in one situation, it is to be applied to Israelites as well. Reference is to the law of Deuteronomy 13:13–19 requiring that the *ḥērem* of the peoples of Canaan be carried out against an Israelite town that had gone over entirely to the worship of other gods. It had, in effect, become Canaanite! All of the inhabitants of the town were to be slain, and all of its property destroyed. Parts of the "self" were thus being demonized and treated like the extreme "other."

In effect, the condemnation of the individual idolater, commanded in the preceding passage, Deuteronomy 13:7–12, was applied collectively.

In regard to external or distant enemies, peace terms were first to be offered to besieged towns. If they surrendered, their populations would be spared, but reduced to corvée status, usually known in biblical parlance as *mas* [*ʿōbēd*] "[working] conscripts" (Gen 49:15, Jos 16:10, 1 Kings 9:15). If the offer of peace was refused, all grown males were to be slain, and women and children spared. Israelites were to partake of the spoils of such external enemies, in accordance with normal practice. The fate of captive women in this legislation is of particular interest with respect to Numbers 31:13–20. The law of Deuteronomy 21:10–14 stipulates that an Israelite may take as wife a captive woman who had presumably never been married. This is not stated explicitly, but that this was her previous status may be inferred from the fact that she was to mourn her father and mother, presumably slain in the war, with no mention made of a former husband, or of children. It is, all the same, interesting that such a female captive would be called *ʾēšet yepat tōʾar* "a beautiful woman," using the term *ʾiššāh*, which might suggest that she had been married. Usage here is generic, however, so that Hebrew *ʾiššāh* merely identifies a woman, perhaps more specifically, a marriageable woman. The captive woman was to undertake additional acts designed to divest her of her former identity. It is to be assumed that reference is to women taken captive from external, "distant" nations, not from the Canaanite peoples. What is remarkable is that this provision is unaffected by any ban on foreign marriage.

The foregoing summary of war policy raises the question as to the status of the Midianites in that context, as specifically treated in Numbers 31. The projected war with the Midianites occurred outside the Land of Canaan, presumably in Transjordan. It occurred before the entry of the Israelites into Canaan. Nowhere in Torah literature are the Midianites numbered among the former inhabitants of the land, listed as either six or seven peoples: Jebusites, Amorites, Canaanites, Hivvites, Girgashites, Perizzites and Hittites (cf., most immediately, Deut 20:17). It should be noted that the accounts of the wars with the Midianites in Judges 6–8 also treat that nation as external to Canaan, as invaders of Canaan from across the Jordan. In the course of the battles, Gideon and his fighters pursued the Midianites back across the Jordan, thereby terminating their domination of regions of northern Israel. Some of the battles occur west of the Jordan and some in Transjordan, and all were part of the Israelite conquest of Canaan. And yet, the Midianites are not classified as Canaanites.

We may, therefore, regard the provisions of Number 31 as a reflex of the Deuteronomic laws of war applicable to foreign, or distant towns, whereby only unmarried captive women were to be spared. The only discrepancy pertains to male children who are to be slain according to the explicit statement of Numbers 31:17, whereas according to Deuteronomy 20:13–14, it would appear that all children were to be spared, not only female children. And yet, it is possible that in the priestly reading of Deuteronomy 20:13, reference to *kol zekûrāh* "all of its male population" was taken to include male children as objects of annihilation, so that when the following verse, Deuteronomy 20:14, states *raq hannāšîm wehaṭṭāp* "except for the women and children," this was understood to be restricted to female children. This would be a case of internal exegesis, because the fairly rare locution, abstract *zekûr* "males, male population," occurring in the festival laws, most likely refers only to adult males, those who would be required to appear at the pilgrimage site (Exod 23:17, 34:23, Deut 16:16).

To summarize: The priestly tabu regarding the married women of Midian (like that affecting the married women of Jabesh Gilead) derives from Deuteronomic legislation affecting the defeated populations of foreign, non-Canaanite peoples. It is a practical formulation of the implications of that policy, with a possible discrepancy affecting male children. The requirement of purification applicable to the Israelite fighters, and to their clothing and some of their utensils, represents a priestly application of the provisions of Numbers 19. This regimen falls short, however, of explaining the further requirement, stated in Numbers 31:21–24, that spoils intended for utilization by Israelites must also be purified.

The underlying concept is that the spoils of the wars of conquest shared in the impurity associated with the enemy, and in that sense, were dangerous. This is suggested by the diction of Deuteronomy 13:18, part of a principal statement on the extreme *ḥērem* applicable to the Canaanite peoples: "Let nothing of what is proscribed cling to your hand (*lō' yidbaq beyādekā me'ûmāh min haḥērem*), so that YHWH may turn back from his wrath and grant you kindness." The spin-off of this Deuteronomic policy in Joshua 6–7, the account of the conquest of Jericho, was modulated by priestly notions and it restates the same apprehensions. Such fears also dominate the tale of Saul's offense in sparing the flocks of the Amalekites, as well as their king (1 Sam 15). Ultimately, such concerns are rooted in magical notions.

COMMENT 3: THE SACRED DEVOTION OF THE SPOILS OF WAR

It has already been noted that, as an alternative to destroying spoils, it was often acceptable to devote them to the god, or gods of the victors, which meant in practical terms, to temples and their priests. One can safely assume that this was normal practice in ancient Israel, although it is curious that relatively little is said about the sacred devotion of spoils elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. Such utilization of spoils would have been credible as Saul's pretext for sparing the Amalekite flocks had not Saul's rejection by God already been decreed (1 Sam 15:20–21), and the deposit of Goliath's sword in the temple of Nob (1 Sam 21:10) may reflect the devotion of spoils to a temple. The narratives of the historical wars against the Midianites, in Judges 8:24–27, relate that at one point, Gideon collected precious jewelry taken as spoils from the Midianites. He fashioned an Ephod from these objects, which he then installed in his hometown, Ophrah. That cult object proved to be ill-advised, however, for the people began to revere it as an object of worship, to the discredit of Gideon and his clan (Judg 8:24–27). So, Judges 8 preserves what is judged to be an earlier reference to the devotion of spoils after a war with the Midianites.

In the narratives of David's military victories we also find occasional references to the dedication of the spoils of war to the God of Israel. Thus, after defeating Hadadezer, king of (Aram) Zobah, David consecrated (*hiqdîš*) to YHWH objects of gold and other metals that he had taken from that king, and from all the lands he conquered (2 Sam 8:9–12). That account may have generated statements in Chronicles recording the devotion of spoils to the Temple. Thus, 1 Chronicles 26:26–28:

> That same Shelomuth and his brothers were in charge of all the treasuries of consecrated objects that King David consecrated (*hiqdîš*), and the chieftains of the clans, and the officers of thousands and hundreds and the other army officers. They dedicated some of the booty of the wars to maintain the Temple of YHWH. All that Samuel, the seer, had dedicated, and Saul, son of Kish, and Abner, son of Ner, and Joab, son of Zeruiah—or [what] any other person has dedicated, was under the charge of Shelomuth and his brothers.

A similar statement, in some respects even more detailed, appears in 1 Chronicles 29:1–9, where we are told that David and his military officers and tribal chiefs undertook to "contribute" (the Hebrew verb is *hitnaddēb*) large amounts of gold and silver and other less precious metals to the construction of the Temple of Jerusalem (cf. 1 Chron 25:1). Clearly, reference is to spoils of war. The key term is *ṣābāʾ* "military force," which links 1 Chronicles 25–26 and 29 to Numbers 31. It would seem, therefore, that the complicated stipulations of Numbers 31 reflect the same mentality as that which informs the historiography of the Chronicler, a product of the Achaemenid Period.

It emerges that the Levites were to receive ten times as much spoils as the priests. Their rate is specified as one out of fifty, whereas the priests were to receive one out of five hundred. If realistic, and if Numbers 31 is, indeed, to be assigned to the Persian Period, this differential indicates that in the Period of the Return and subsequently there were many more Levites than priests. A comparison of the present basis with the regulations set forth in Numbers 18 further suggests a correlation with the tithe due the Levites, which was ten times the levy imposed on the Levites, themselves, who were to remit to the priests one percent of their receipts. It is realistic to calculate that ten percent of the annual yield would have amounted to far more than first fruits, sacrificial offerings, and the like. According to Numbers 18:14, all *ḥērem* property was to go to the priests (see the Notes to Num 18:14; Levine 1993:446–447). If that regulation meant to include condemned spoils of war, which is not at all certain, then the provisions of Numbers 31 effectively modified the basis for taxing spoils in support of the Temple, its cult and its servitors. It is more likely that Numbers 18 is referring to Israelites whose property had been proscribed by judicial authorities.

COMMENT 4:

HISTORICAL INDICATORS AND THE QUEST FOR *SITZ-IM-LEBEN*

In the Notes to Numbers 31, several Aramaistic locutions were identified, which suggest assigning this chapter to the Achaemenid Period. Thus, the idiom *weyihyû ʿal Midyān* "and let them move against Midian" in Numbers 31:3 reflects the Aramaic *hawô ʿal Yerûšelem*. "They have attacked Jerusalem" (Ezra 4:20). Usage of the rare verb *m-s-r* in Numbers 31:5, which derives from the Aramaic, also turns our attention to the Achaemenid Period, or very nearly to it. But perhaps the most telling indicator is provided by the list of the kings of Midian in Numbers 31:8. E. A. Knauf's suggestion that these are in actuality the names of towns and sites along the Nabataean caravan route through North Arabia and Transjordan has much to recommend it (see Notes to Num 31:8). Among the names is the indigenous name of Petra, namely, *Rqmw* (Hebrew *Reqem*). Also suggestive is the fact that one of the Midianite kings, Zur, was undoubtedly the father of Kozbi, the Midianite woman involved in the Baal Peor incident (Num 25:15). This name may be preserved in the Arabic toponym Khirbet Ḍor in North Arabia. All of this seems to date Numbers 31 to the Persian Period when such Nabataean names would have been known to the biblical author.

Can such information suggest an historical basis for the hostility of the Israelites to the Midianites expressed in Numbers 31, and which was introduced in Numbers 25:6–18? We first encountered Midianites in Numbers

10:29–32, against the background of Exodus 18, in a brief episode associated with Moses' father-in-law, who is identified as a Midianite. It was suggested that Kenites and Midianites had been confused, with the authors of these accounts having friendly Kenites in mind when they spoke of Midianites (see Levine 1993:92–95, "Disguised Kenites" and "Hostile Midianites," and Levine 1993:334–335, "The Midianite Connection"). It is possible, therefore, that the author of Numbers 31 likewise identified as Midianites other similar groups with whom Israelites were in conflict at various times. It may be, as maintained by Mendenhall (1992, in *ABD* IV:815–818) that in later times, Midian became merely a geographical designation rather than an ethnic one.

The best candidates for hostility in the Achaemenid Period who might credibly be associated with the Midianites are the Qedarite Arabs, especially those under the rule of Geshem, the Arab (*Gešem hāʿarbî*) of Nehemiah 2:19, 6:1–2, whose Arabic name, Gashmu (*Gašmu*) also occurs in Nehemiah 6:6. These Arabs were among the precursors of the Nabataeans. As I. Ephʿal (1982:60–63) points out, the nomenclature used to identify nomadic or bedouin peoples is fluid and subject to change. A good deal is known from extrabiblical sources about Geshem, who formed a coalition with Sanballat and Tobiah, two powerful Jews of Transjordanian, and proceeded to interfere with Nehemiah's efforts to fortify Jerusalem and to restore it to prominence (Ephʿal 1982:210–214). The personal name Gashmu is well attested in North Arabia of the Persian Period and thereafter. The biblical Geshem is actually known as the son of the King of Kedar from a fifth century B.C.E. Aramaic inscription from Tell el-Maskhuta in northeastern Egypt, inscribed on a silver bowl, which refers to Qaynu, the son of Gashmu, the king of Kedar (Drumbell 1971). A second Lihyanite inscription from the same period, found at Dedan (el-ʿUla) also mentions one who was probably the same Gashmu (Rabinowitz 1956). The Kedarites were a powerful people whose hegemony and influence extended over a large area to the south and east of Judah, and westward across the Sinai Peninsula into northeastern Egypt (Knauf 1992, in *ABD* IV:9–10).

It is interesting to find numerous references to Arabs in Chronicles, and other postexilic biblical sources, suggesting that they were a major force in the region during the Persian period. Although purportedly talking about the much earlier period of the monarchies, these references are patently postexilic, and may reflect actual conflicts and tensions with the then contemporary Arabs. A good example is 2 Chronicles 21:16, which records an attack on Judah by Philistines "and the Arabs who were neighbors of the Kushites." We read in 2 Chronicles 20:1, 26:7, Ezra 2:50//Neh 7:52 of an Arab tribe known as Meunites (Hebrew *Meʿûnîm*). There are also references to conflicts with Hagarites, Hebrew *Hagriʾîm* in 1 Chronicles 5:10, 19–20; *hahagrî* in 1 Chronicles 27:31, and *Hagrîm* in Psalm 83:7, in a passage referred to earlier for its mention of Midian (R. H. Smith 1992, in *ABD* I:324–327).

There are earlier references to hostile Arab nations, and to friendly ones, in biblical literature, especially from around the time of the fall of Judah. Nevertheless, the concentration of such references in biblical literature of the Achaemenid Period, some of them corroborated by external sources, allows the commentator to see in Numbers 31 viewed against the background of Numbers 25:6–18, a retrojection of contemporary hostility into the prehistory of Israel. This is expressive of the priestly agenda in Torah literature, generally, and in Numbers, particularly.

FIGURE 1: TAXES ON COLLECTIVE SPOILS OF WAR (Num 31:25–47)

Division of spoils:

Basis: Half to fighting force (*tōpesê hammilḥāmāh*); half to entire community (*kōl hā‘ēdāh*).

To the fighting force:

Type of Spoils	Total Spoils	*Maḥaṣît* (50%)	*Mekes* Rate: 1 out of 500
sheep	675,000	337,500	675
cattle	72,000	36,000	72
mules	61,000	30,500	61
female captives (unmarried)	32,000	16,000	32

Payable to: Eleazar, the priest

To the community:

Type of Spoils	Total Spoils	*Maḥaṣît* (50%)	*Mekes* Rate: 1 out of 50
sheep	["]	["]	[6,750]
cattle	["]	["]	[720]
mules	["]	["]	[610]
female captives (unmarried)	["]	["]	[320]

Payable to: the Levites

PART IX.

NUMBERS 32: THE TRANSJORDANIAN ISRAELITE TRIBES

◆

INTRODUCTION

Numbers 32 resumes the agenda of the JE historiographers, last encountered in Numbers 25:1–5, the primary account of the Baal Peor incident at Abel Shittim in Transjordan. This agenda relates to the Israelite communities in Transjordan—their history, views regarding their legitimacy and their relationship to the main body of Israelites who settled in Canaan. To appreciate the special literary function of Numbers 32, it would be well to review what preceded it, and to project what follows it in the Book of Numbers.

From Numbers 25:6 to Numbers 31:54, we encounter only priestly writings that, except for expansions on the Baal Peor incident (Num 25:6–18), and a priestly account of a war with the Midianites (Numbers 31), pursue a different agenda. These priestly writings have little to do with the life of the Transjordanian communities, as such. They relate more to the anticipated Israelite conquest of and settlement in Canaan itself, and to the ordering of Israelite life in the new land. Thus, Numbers 26 records a census preparatory to crossing the Jordan. Numbers 27 legitimizes the territorial claims of the tribe of Manasseh in Canaan, west of the Jordan. Numbers 28–29 present a year-long regimen for the public cult, and Numbers 30 deals with vows and other cultic pledges normally pronounced on the occasion of pilgrimages.

We must look back even further in order to retrieve the Transjordanian agenda. Beginning in Numbers 21, we find a series of relatively early texts dealing with the Transjordanian experience. The historiographic accounts and poetic excerpts preserved in Numbers 21:1–22:1 record that the Israelites, after conquering the Transjordanian territories north of the Arnon, in the Moabite Mishor and the Bashan, arrived at the Plains of Moab. They settled in the Amorite towns, and in Jazer and its dependencies. These reports are followed by the Balaam Pericope (Numbers 22–24), which probably derives from independent sources, poetic and narrative, and that projects hostile relations, just short of war, with the Moabites. Then comes the brief account of a serious religious lapse at Baal Peor (Num 25:1–5), once again indicative of hostile relations with the Moabites, expanded by priestly writers to include the Midianites as well. This is followed in the historiographic chain by the present chapter, Numbers 32, whose agenda progresses to questions about the legitimacy of the Transjordanian Israelite communities.

Looking ahead, we observe that subsequent to Numbers 32 one finds only priestly texts. These review the route (or routes) the Israelites took on their way to Canaan (Numbers 33); they project the advance apportionment of the land (Numbers 34), and prescribe a set of laws intended to govern homicide in the new land (Numbers 35). The Book of Numbers concludes with Numbers 36, an addendum to Numbers 27, that further deals with the territory of Manasseh in Canaan proper, Manasseh being the only tribe to hold territory on both sides of the Jordan.

To summarize: Numbers 32 performs a pivotal literary function. It carries forward the historiographic chain that began in Numbers 21, by focusing on an issue prominent in the writings of the Deuteronomist (Deuteronomy 3), namely, the legitimacy of the Transjordanian tribes of Reuben and Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh. Concern with such legitimacy remains a prominent theme in the Book of Joshua. Some of its implications have already been discussed in the Comments to Numbers 21, and this subject will receive further attention in the Comments to Numbers 32.

The source-critical analysis of Numbers 32 presents particular difficulties, as noted by G. B. Gray (Gray-*ICC*:425–426), and it would be of dubious value to attempt a specific breakdown into JE and P. In general agreement with Gray, the following survey of Numbers 32 can be proposed:

(1) There is reason to conclude that early records of Israelite settlement in Transjordan were preserved, especially those dealing with the tribe of Gad (see the Comments to Num 21). In the present chapter, the concluding passage (Num 32:39–42) most probably constitutes an old record of the Machirite-Manassite settlement in Gilead and Bashan. Topically, this passage could just as well have come near the end of Numbers 21. What it refers to as a clan of Manassites, the Machirite clan, is schematized by the Deuteronomist as "half of the tribe of Manasseh" (Deut 3:12–13). This scheme was adopted by the compiler of Numbers 32, and is evident in several sections of Joshua. There is a problem in the fact that Gilead, an admittedly imprecise term of reference, is variously said to have been settled by Reuben and Gad (thus, Num 32:1–4, 29), and by the Machirite clan of Manasseh (Num 32:39–42). This apparent discrepancy, actually a difference between two separate literary sources, is resolved by Numbers 32:33, a later statement with Deuteronomistic overtones, which includes half of the tribe of Manasseh in Moses' grant of Gilead (see below in the Notes to Num 32:1, and Num 32:39–42, and the Comments to Num 32).

(2) Following Gray, we note certain locutions characteristic of JE, as well as the fact that in speaking of the route of the spies sent to Canaan, Numbers 32:9 has them proceeding to Wadi Eshcol in the Hebron area (so JE in Num 13:23) rather than to Lebo of Hamath, as P would have it in Numbers 13:22. In contrast, reference to Joshua, son of Nun, alongside Caleb in Numbers 32:12 and to Eleazar, the priest in Numbers 32:2, 28, and usage of distinctly priestly terms such as the *ʿēdāh* "community" and the *nesîʾîm* "chieftains," and reference to territory as *ʾaḥuzzāh* "acquired estate," all demonstrate the considerable input of priestly writers. Reference to males "from twenty years of age and above" (Num 32:11) marks a distinctly priestly classification.

(3) Of considerable interest are traces of Deuteronomistic input. Thus, the spies were sent from Kadesh Barnea (Num 32:8), which is the name given to that site in Deuteronomy 1–2, and in Deuteronomy 9:23, whereas elsewhere it is simply Kadesh. There are also passages that read like Deuteronomy, as for instance, Numbers 32:13 with its use of the idiom *ha‘ōśeh ’et hāra‘ be‘ênê YHWH* "who does what is evil in the sight of YHWH," which resonates with Deuteronomic diction (see Notes to Num 32:13). Further on in Numbers 32, we encounter the idiom *‘ābar-ḥālûṣ/ḥalûsîm* "to cross over as armed fighters" (Num 32:21, 27, 29–30, 32), which appears to echo Deuteronomy 3:18. Then, too, use of the Hiphil *hôrîš* "to dispossess, drive out" sounds Deuteronomistic in tone, although such idioms did not originate with Deuteronomy (see Notes to Num 33:53).

Given these facts, the most reasonable conclusion seems to be, as Gray suggests, that wide-ranging materials were compiled by a later priestly writer, surely cognizant of Numbers 13–14 and 21, of Deuteronomy 1–3, and much more. That author braided and even rephrased earlier versions to compose Numbers 32 as we have it. There is expansive repetition, and noticeable thematic development. In this connection, we could go as far as to assign Numbers 32:28–32, a second version of the Transjordanian dispensation, to P. Not only is it replete with priestly vocabulary, but it has Moses issuing a repetitive command to the leadership and tribal chieftains in their priestly configuration.

Taken as presented, Numbers 32 relates that the tribes of Reuben and Gad, after surveying the territories conquered by the Israelites, found the areas of Gilead and Jazer to their liking by virtue of their extensive grazing land. They sought Moses' permission to settle there rather than in Cisjordan together with their fellow Israelites, and not to be compelled to cross the Jordan (Num 32:1–6). Moses rebuked the tribes of Reuben and Gad in harsh terms, likening their present request to the dampening report of the spies of their father's generation, who had advised against undertaking the conquest of the Promised Land. This recalcitrance had evoked the edict against the Wilderness Generation (Num 32:7–15). The two tribes then pledged to participate in the conquest of Canaan as an armed force alongside their fellow Israelites, and only afterwards to return to their territory in Transjordan, foregoing any claim to a *naḥalāh* west of the Jordan (Num 32:16–19). In two versions, the narrative repeats the terms under which the request of the two tribes was granted. These conditions are spelled out in binary terms, specifying the reward for fulfilling commitments and the punishment to ensue for failure to do so. The former version (Num 32:20–27) has very little of the priestly redaction in it (only Num 32:22b, which may be a gloss), whereas the latter (Num 32:28–32) might well be taken from P. Moses officially granted dispensation to the now two and one-half tribes (half of Manasseh having been added) to settle in the soon-to-be-rebuilt towns of the former kingdoms of Sihon and Og, which are then listed (Num 32:33–38). This list leads directly into the record of the settlement of the Machirite clan of Manasseh in sections of Gilead and Bashan (Num 32:39–42).

TRANSLATION

32 [1]Extensive livestock belonged to the Reubenites and Gadites, in very great numbers. They surveyed the region of Jazer and the region of Gilead, and behold, the area was good for livestock.

[2]The Gadites and Reubenites arrived to address Moses and Eleazar, the priest, and the chieftains of the community as follows:

[3]"Ataroth, and Dibon, and Jazer, and Nimrah, and Heshbon and Elealeh, and Sebam and Nebo and Beon—

[4]"the land that YHWH struck down before the community of Israel is a land good for livestock, and your servants have livestock."

[5]They went on to say: "If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants as an acquired estate; do not make us cross the Jordan."

[6]But Moses said to the Gadites and Reubenites: "Shall your kinsmen come to do battle while you remain settled here?

[7]"Why would you turn the will of the Israelites against crossing over into the land which YHWH has granted them?

[8]"This is what your ancestors did when I dispatched them from Kadesh Barnea to survey the land.

[9]"They went up to Wadi Eshcol and surveyed the land, and proceeded to turn the will of the Israelites against entering the land which YHWH had granted them.

[10]"YHWH became enraged at that time, and he took an oath as follows:

[11]"Let not the men who came up out of Egypt, from twenty years of age and above, ever see the land that I promised to Abraham and to Isaac and to Jacob, for they did not remain committed to me.

[12]"Except for Caleb, son of Jephunneh, the Kenizzite, and Joshua, son of Nun, for they remained committed to YHWH.

[13]"Then YHWH became enraged at Israel, and he tossed them about in the wilderness for forty years until the entire generation that had done what was evil in the sight of YHWH came to an end.

[14]"And now you have arisen in place of your ancestors, a breed of sinful men, to add yet more to YHWH's wrath toward Israel.

[15]"Were you to go back on your commitment to him, he would continue to abandon him in the wilderness, and you will have destroyed this entire people."

[16]They then approached him saying: "We will build sheepfolds here for our livestock, and towns for our young children.

[17]"As for us, we will swiftly deploy as an armed force in advance of the Israelite people until we have brought them to their territory, while our young children remain settled in the fortified towns, [protected] from the inhabitants of the land.

[18]"We will not return to our homes until the Israelites, to a man, shall have each taken possession of his estate.

[19]"For we will not receive our estate together with them, across the Jordan and beyond, for we will have [already] received our estate on the eastern side of the Jordan."

[20]Then Moses said to them: "If you will do this thing; if you will deploy as an armed force in advance of YHWH to do battle,

[21]"and every armed man of yours will cross the Jordan in advance of YHWH until he drives out his enemies from his presence,

[22]"with the result that the land is subdued before YHWH—thereafter you may return and be free of obligation to YHWH and Israel, and this land shall be for you an acquired estate in the presence of YHWH.

[23]"But if you do not act accordingly, you will have offended against YHWH, and know—it is your very own offense that will overtake you!

[24]"Build for yourselves towns for your young children and sheepfolds for your flocks, and that which departs from your mouth—fulfill!"

[25]Then the Gadites and Reubenites addressed Moses as follows: "Your servants shall do what my lord commands.

[26]"Our young children, our wives, our livestock and all of our cattle shall remain there in the towns of Gilead.

[27]"And your servants shall cross over, every armed combatant to do battle in advance of YHWH, just as my lord instructs."

[28]Then Moses gave instructions to them, joined by Eleazar, the priest, and Joshua, son of Nun, and the heads of the patriarchal tribes of the Israelites.

[29]Moses said to them: "If the Gadites and Reubenites [indeed] cross the Jordan together with you, every armed man, to do battle in advance of YHWH, with the result that the land is subdued before you, you shall grant to them the land of Gilead as an acquired estate.

[30]"But if they do not cross over as armed men together with you, let them acquire their estate in your midst, in the land of Canaan."

[31]Then the Gadites and Reubenites replied as follows: "That which YHWH has commanded your servants, so shall we do.

[32]"As for us, we shall cross over as armed men in advance of YHWH [into] the land of Canaan, our acquired received estate in Transjordan being in our possession."

[33]So Moses granted them, to the Gadites and the Reubenites, and to half

the tribe of Manasseh, son of Joseph, the kingdom of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and of the kingdom of Og, king of the Bashan; the land inclusive of its towns, within the encompassing borders of the towns of the land.

[34]The Gadites rebuilt Dibon and Ataroth and Aroer,

[35]and Atroth-Shophan and Jazer and Jogbehah,

[36]and Beth-Nimrah and Beth-Haran, as fortified towns and sheepfolds.

[37]And the Reubenites rebuilt Heshbon and Elealeh and Kiriathaim

[38]and Nebo, and Baal-Meon—whose names were switched—and Sibmah. They gave names to the towns that they rebuilt.

[39]The sons of Machir, son of Manasseh, went to the Gilead and captured it, driving out the Amorites who inhabited it.

[40]Then Moses granted the Gilead to Machir, son of Manasseh, and he settled in it.

[41]And Jair, son of Manasseh, went and captured the farming villages of Ham, and renamed them the Farming Villages of Jair.

[42]Nobah went and captured Kenath, together with its daughter settlements, and renamed it Nobah, after himself.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 32:1–27: MIXED TRADITIONS ON ISRAELITE SETTLEMENT IN TRANSJORDAN

1. *to the Reubenites and Gadites.* The order of the two tribes in this verse is Reuben and Gad, the order followed in Deuteronomy 3:12, 16, and predominantly in Joshua. Elsewhere in Numbers 32, Gad precedes Reuben (contrast Num 32:1 with Num 32:2, 7, 25, 29, 31, 33–37). Thus, Numbers 32:1 is seen to resonate Deuteronomy 3:19–20.

the region of Jazer and the region of Gilead

The frequent Hebrew word *ʾereṣ*, usually rendered "land, country" bears a specialized connotation when used in conjunction with towns and their surrounding areas, where it is best translated "region, district, hinterland," rather than as a term designating an entire country. Thus, Joshua 17:8: "The region of Tappuah (*ʾeres Tappûaḥ*) belonged to Manasseh, but Tappuah [itself], on the border of Manasseh, belonged to the Ephraimites." Other probable examples are (a) Isaiah 21:14: "-inhabitants of the region of Tema (*yōšebê ʾereṣ Têmāʾ*); and (b) Genesis 48:7: "-during the journey, when an additional stretch of the region (*kibrat ʾereṣ*) [remained] before arriving at Ephrath." The convention of listing towns and designating their hinterlands *ʾereṣ* is evident in the Mesha inscription, were we find two such entries: *ʾrṣ mhdbʾ* "the region of Medeba" (lines 7–8), and *bʾrṣ ʿṭrt* "in the region of Ataroth" (line 10). This subtlety of usage will prove to be significant in delimiting the areas of settlement of the various tribes more precisely.

The first mention of Jazer (Hebrew *Yaʿzēr*) came in Numbers 21:32, where we read that the Israelites, en masse, conquered the town and its dependencies, located on the Ammonite border (see Notes to Num 21:24, 32). This district may have been independent at the time, and not part of the Ammonite or Amorite kingdoms, even though Numbers 21:32 reports that Amorites lived there. Peterson (1992, in *ABD* III:650–651) favors Jazer's identification with Khirbet Jazzir, as earlier proposed by Abel and de Vaux. Not only do the Hebrew and Arabic names resemble each other, but the location at the head of the Wadi Su'eib, which flows into the Jordan, correlates with the location of this site by Eusebius, *Onomasticon* 12:1–4.

The name Gilead (Hebrew *Gilʿād*) has a complex history. As a clan eponym, it first appears in Numbers 26:29–30, then in Numbers 27:1, and is resumed in Numbers 36:1 (see Notes to Num 26:29, and the Comments to Num 27). As a geographical designation it designates the name of a town, *Ga-al-ʿa-a-[za]*, in an Assyrian inscription from Nimrud, most likely referring to Ramoth-Gilead. The name *glʿd* is also attested in Ugaritic, both as a personal name and as a toponym (sources in Ottosson 1992, in *ABD* II:1020–1022). The determined form, *haggilʿād*, consistently designates the region of Gilead, as a whole, whereas indeterminate *Gilʿād* at times seems to refer to a town by that name, either Jabesh-Gilead, or more likely Ramoth-Gilead. Thus, Hosea 6:8: "Gilead, town of (*qiryat*) evildoers."

In the present verse, symmetry indeed suggests that both Jazer and Gilead are perceived as towns, with their hinterlands, and this seems to be true in Numbers 32:39–42, as well, since it is normally said that one captures (Hebrew *lākad*) towns. Certainly, Numbers 32:1, 3 and Numbers 32:34–38 all speak of a network of towns, and Numbers 32:39 uses this verb to describe the Machirite conquest of Gilead. Because of such ambiguity, it is difficult to delimit the extent of the area referred to here precisely, and the same uncertainty is evident further on in Numbers 32. Jazer is located in the southeast of the Land of Gilead, as normally delimited., whereas both Jabesh-Gilead and Ramoth-Gilead are located much further north (see Notes to Num 32:3).

The chapter begins with reference to the livestock of the Reubenites and Gadites. Hebrew *miqneh*, from the verb *qānāh* "to create, acquire," belongs to the pastoral vocabulary, and identifies livestock as the principal type of property in such economies. Thus, Genesis 4:20: 'He (= Jabal) was the forerunner of those who dwelled in tents amid herds (*yōšēb ʾōhel ûmiqneh*)." Included as *miqneh* are flocks and cattle (Exod 12:38, Koh 2:7). The same semantic may explain how Hebrew *rekûš* came to mean "property." It may derive from *rekeš* "horses, cavalry" (1 Kings 5:8, Micah 1:13, Esther 8:10, 14).

2. In this verse, and henceforth in Numbers 32, the order of the two tribes

is reversed, with Gad preceding Reuben. The effect of the two verbs *wayyābō'û* "They arrived" and *wayyō'merû* "and they said" is to make of the former an auxiliary verb. Thus: "They arrived to address." Eleazar, the priest, has been exercising leadership since the passing of Aaron, recorded in Numbers 20:22–29. On the title *nāśî'* "chieftain" and the term *'ēdāh* "community" see Notes to Numbers 1:2, 16; Levine 1993:130, 138.

3–4. The territory of the Gadites and Reubenites is delimited in greater detail by listing nine towns occupied by them. Except for Beon (Masoretic *Be'ōn*), whose spelling is problematic, all others listed are well known as they are registered here: (1) Ataroth (Hebrew *'Aṭārôt* "crowns") is usually identified with Khirbet 'Attarus in the western Moabite Mishor (see below, in Num 32:34). The inscription of Mesha, the Moabite king (lines 10–11), relates that the Gadites had been living in Ataroth from time immemorial, and that "the king of Israel," a reference to Omri, had fortified it. Aspects of the Gadite settlement in Transjordan are discussed in the Comments to Numbers 21. (2) Dibon (Hebrew *Dîbōn*), referred to as Mesha's own town in his inscription (line 1), was located just north of the Arnon. Its history, and the results of archaeological excavations at the site, have been discussed in the Notes to Numbers 21:30, and in the Comments to Numbers 21. Its major excavator, A. D. Tushingham (1992, in *ABD* II:194–196) presents a convenient review of its history. In the Heshbon Ballad (Num 21:30), it represents the southern extent of Sihon's reputed conquests, in contrast to Heshbon, to the north of it. (3) Jazer (Hebrew *Ya'zēr*) has already been identified in Notes to Numbers 32:1, above, and was previously referred to in Numbers 21:31. (4) Nimrah (Hebrew *Nimrāh*), is named *Bêth-Nimrāh* below, in Numbers 32:36 (cf. Jos 13:27). The prophetic oracles against Moab (Isa 15:6, Jer 48:34) mention "the waters of Nimrim" (*mê Nimrîm*). The ancient name persists in Tell Nimrim, at Wadi Nimrim, but the actual ancient site is more precisely identified as Tell Bleibil, along the north-south road to the Dead Sea, some kilometers east of the Jordan, south of Adam. (5) Heshbon (Hebrew *Hešbôn* = Tell Hesban), Sihon's capital, is discussed in Notes to Numbers 21:25, and in the Comments to Numbers 21. (6) Elealeh (Hebrew *'El'ālēh*) is identified by Mattingly (1992, in *ABD* II:432) as Khirbet el-'Al, located 1.5 miles northeast of Tell Hesban. It is always mentioned together with Heshbon, and was targeted in prophetic oracles against Moab in Isaiah 15:4, 16:9 and in Jeremiah 48:34 (7) Sebam (Hebrew *Śebām*) is correctly spelled *Śibmāh* further on in Numbers 32:38, and is transcribed in the Greek of the LXX as *Sebama* (Jos 13:19). The vines of Sibmah come in for denunciation in the prophecies of Isaiah 16:8–13 and Jeremiah 48:32–33. It is a Moabite town that has not been definitively identified, and that was probably located on the Madaba Plain near Beth Baal Meon (Franklyn 1992, in *ABD* VI:1–2). (8) Nebo (Hebrew *Nebô[h]*) is mentioned in Numbers 33:47 as one of the last stations along the Exodus route. From all indications it was situated in northwest Moab, and it was located by Eusebius eight Roman miles south of Heshbon. The name Nebo recurs below, in Numbers 32:38 (cf. 1 Chron 5:8). Once again, it is targeted in the prophecies of Isaiah 15:2 and Jeremiah 48:1, 22 against Moab, and is mentioned prominently in the Mesha inscription (lines 14–18) as a town conquered from the Israelites by that king at the command of his god, Kemosh. Nebo was probably located near Mount Nebo. Most geographers have identified it with Khirbet el-Mehayyat, some five miles from Tell Hesban, where Iron I and II remains have been unearthed (Ferch 1992, in *ABD* IV:1056). (9) Beon (Hebrew *Beʿōn*) is most probably a misspelling of *Meʿôn*, a component of the full name of this known site, *Bêt Baʿal-Meʿôn* (Jos 13:17, Jer 48:23, Ezek 25:9, 1 Chron 3:8). Below, in Numbers 32:38, it is registered as *Baʿal Meʿôn*. This site is also mentioned in the Mesha inscription (line 9) as a town fortified by that Moabite king, and has been identified as Khirbet Maʿin, nine kilometers southwest of Medeba (Piccirillo 1992, in *ABD* I:552).

A glance at an atlas map (Aharoni 1993:86, map no. 113) shows that this list follows no recognizable path, and merely names towns located between the Arnon and the Jabbok, several in the immediate area of Heshbon. The present list may have been extrapolated from the even longer list of towns rebuilt by the Gadites and Reubenites, occurring further on, in Numbers 32:34–38. There, the Reubenites are associated with the Heshbon area, although not exclusively so, and the Gadites with Dibon, Ataroth and Jazer, although again, not exclusively so (see below, in Notes to Num 32:34–38).

"the land that YHWH struck down"

The clause *ʾăšer hikkāh YHWH lipnê ʿadạt Yiśrāʾēl* "that YHWH struck down before the community of Israelites" is reminiscent of Judges 4:23: "On that day, God subdued (*wayyaknaʿ ʾelōhîm*) Jabin, the Canaanite king before the Israelites (*lipnê benê Yiśrāʾēl*)." Similar statements are found in Joshua 10:10, 12, 11:6. The force of prepositional *lipnê* is nuanced; it conveys the sense that enemies fall "before the advance of—" the conqueror, that they can not withstand his onslaught (Lev 26:16, 37). Often, this is expressed in the passive voice: The enemy, who could not withstand the onslaught (Jos 1:5), was subdued before the conqueror (Deut 1:42) See further, in Notes to Numbers 32:20, below.

The Hebrew *ʿadat Yiśrāʾēl* "the community of Israel" represents priestly diction (Exod 12:3, 6, 47, Jos 22:16, 22:18, 20, 1 Kings 8:20). Polite discourse, in which the speaker refers to himself as a servant (Hebrew *ʿebed*), is characteristic of courtly dialogue, and is often employed in epistolography. See Notes to Numbers 11:11; Levine 1993:322–323, and cf. Numbers 31:49.

5. *"let this land be given to your servants."* The form *yūttan* "let it be given" is vocalized by the Masoretes as a Hophal with the augmented second radical, but it is, in reality, a form of the internal Qal passive stem, and should

be vocalized *yûtan*. The Masoretes masked this stem, but many examples of it have been recovered. Since the verb precedes the subject, a singular form may introduce a plural subject, and there need not be agreement in gender (so in Lev 11:38, Num 26:54, 2 Kings 5:17). On usage of the verb *nātan* "to grant" in connection with the conveyance of estates and territories, see Numbers 27:6–11 and Notes. The status of the granted land is that of an *ʾaḥuzzāh* "acquired estate," a term whose meaning is explained in the Notes to Numbers 27:5.

"do not make us cross the Jordan."

The *Leitmotif* of "crossing the Jordan" is prominent in Numbers 32, and in Numbers and Deuteronomy generally (see Num 33:51, 35:10, 32, Deut 2:29, 3:27, 4:21). Here we have the factitive-causative function of the Hiphil, *heʿebîr*, namely, "to carry across, compel to cross" (cf. Jos 7:7, 2 Sam 19:41–42).

6. The idiom *yābōʾûʾ lammilḥāmāh* "they shall enter into war, come to do battle" is unusual, but see Notes to Numbers 31:21, and cf. 1 Chronicles 12:19, 2 Chronicles 20. See Numbers 10:9 (Levine 1993:306), where the wording is *kî tābō ʾû milḥāmāh* "when you wage war."

7. *"Why would you turn the will of the Israelites."* The verb *hēnîʾ* "to nullify, retract" is discussed in the context of vows and their annulment in Notes to Numbers 30:6, and with respect to the noun form *tenûʾāh* "denial," in Notes to Numbers 14:34; Levine 1993:370. Idiomatic *hēnîʾ lēb*, unique to this verse and to Numbers 32:9, just below, should yield the sense of turning the thoughts, or the will of another away from an action; the sense of strong dissuasion. Like many verbs denoting an act, Hebrew *hēnîʾ* may connote its result, as well. Cf. Psalm 33:10: "YHWH has thwarted (*hēpîr*) the counsel of nations; he has deterred (*hēnîʾ*) the plans of peoples."

8. Reference in this and the following verses is to Numbers 13–14, where we read of the dispatching of spies to reconnoiter Canaan and of the resulting edict pronounced against the Wilderness Generation. In that text, JE and priestly sources have been braided (see the treatment of Num 13–14 in Levine 1993:347–381). In the present account, the version of these events given in Deuteronomy 1:19–36 is also echoed.

"when I dispatched them from Kadesh Barnea"

Reference here to Kadesh Barnea is most clearly reminiscent of Deuteronomy 1:2, 19, 2:14, 9:23, and mention of Wadi Eshcol recalls JE in Numbers 13:23–24, and also Deuteronomy 1:24. Idiomatic *millēʾ ʾaḥarê* "to remain committed to—" recalls the diction of Numbers 14:24, taken from JE (see below, in Notes to Num 32:11). However, the inclusion of Joshua, son of Nun, alongside Caleb, son of Jephunneh, just below in Numbers 32:12, clearly marks these verses as priestly, as does the singling out of all those twenty years of age and above for death in the wilderness, which recalls the wording of Numbers 14:29.

Moses' present rebuke is harsh; it compares the request of the two tribes to remain in Transjordan to the attitude of the previous generation of Israelites who objected to undertaking the conquest of the Promised Land, and who desired to remain in the wilderness. And yet, the comparison is understandable if one considers the priestly view that the Promised Land lay west of the Jordan. One senses in priestly writings, extending into the Book of Joshua, a pronounced policy of regarding the Transjordanian Israelite settlement as illegitimate. To remain east of the Jordan was, in effect, to remain outside the Promised Land, to refuse to undertake its conquest. This enigmatic policy will be discussed in the Comments to Numbers 32, and has been briefly taken up in the Introduction to Numbers (Levine 1993:60–62).

10. *"YHWH became enraged at that time."* God's earlier oath is variously expressed in Deuteronomy 1:34–36, and in Numbers 14:21–24, 28–35.

11.*"for they did not remain committed to me."* On the expression *millē' 'aḥarê*—"to remain committed to, to follow after"—see Notes to Numbers 14:24; Levine 1993:368. This idiom contrasts with *kî tešûbūn mē'aḥarê* "were you to go back on your commitment," in Numbers 32:15, below.

12. *"Except for Caleb."* Caleb is here identified as *haqqenizzî* "the Kenizzite," as he is in Joshua 14:6, 14, but not explicitly so elsewhere in the traditions of Numbers 13–14, Deuteronomy 1, Judges 1 or 1 Chronicles 2, 4, 6. A close reading of Joshua 14:6–15 shows a literary relationship to Numbers 32, which would explain why only these two texts specify Caleb's clan affiliation in this way. The name Kenaz (Hebrew *Qenāz*) is elsewhere associated with Caleb's family in other ways, however. A certain Kenaz emerges as Caleb's younger brother in the narratives of Joshua 15:17, Judges 1:13, 3:9, 11, and 1 Chronicles 4:13, and as a grandson of Caleb in 1 Chronicles 4:15.

The personal name or eponym *Qenāz* is probably non-Semitic in origin. In Genesis 15:19–21, the Kenizzites are listed among the prior inhabitants of Canaan, along with Jebusites and Kenites, among others. The name Kenaz is also borne by an Edomite chieftain, the son of Eliphaz, firstborn of Esau (Gen 36:11). It has been suggested that some Kenizzites, who inhabited the Negeb, became affiliated with the clans of Judah, as others of the same group had become affiliated with the Edomites. Like the Kenites, who also may have been non-Semitic, the Kenizzites were not targeted for subjugation by the conquering Israelites, but rather joined forces with the Israelites, more particularly with the clans of Judah in gaining sovereignty over southern Canaan and the central hill country in the region of Hebron, as recounted in Joshua 14–15, and in Judges 1 and 3. With respect to the Kenites, see the discussion in Levine 1993:92–94, "Disguised Kenites", and in Levine 1993:315–316, "Moses' Midianite Relations". The Calebite traditions are discussed briefly in Levine 1993:375.

13. *"Then YHWH became enraged at Israel."* God became enraged at the

Israelites and "tossed them about in the wilderness for forty years." This statement resonates with Numbers 14:29–35, most notably Numbers 14:33, where we read that the descendants of the Israelites were to wander in the wilderness for forty years. Numbers 14:35 predicts that "they shall meet their end" (Hebrew *yittammû*) in the wilderness. This theme is echoed in the present verse by the words *ʿad tōm* "until it came to an end." The Hebrew *wayyenīʿēm,* translated idiomatically "and he tossed them about" derives from the verb *n-w-ʿ* "to move about," and the same Hiphil stem connotes deportation in Amos 9:9.

14. *"a breed of sinful men."* The Hebrew noun *tarbût* "breed" is unique in biblical literature, and requires explanation. It most likely expresses the theme of the Piel *ribbāh,* from the root *r-b-h,* which has the meaning "to rear, raise up children," and, by implication, connotes procreation, expressed as "raising up" children. Thus, Lamentations 2:22: "Those whom I nurtured and reared (*ʾašer ṭippaḥtî weribbîtî*)—my enemy has exterminated them." The sense of procreation is embedded in personal names incorporating this verbal root. Two examples are: (a) *Yārobʿām* (consonantal *yrbʿm*), normalized from **yerabbe[h]-ʿam* "The [divine] kinsman raised up" and (b) *Yerūbbaʿal* (consonantal *yrbʿl*), normalized from *yerabbe[h]-baʿal* "Baal raised up." The same connotation is often expressed by the Akkadian D-stem, *rubbu,* parallel in force with the Hebrew Piel (*AHw*:939, s.v. *rabû,* D). In his notes to the present verse, Gray (Gray-ICC:430), refers to the sense of multiplying expressed in the phrase *perû ûrebû* "be fruitful and increase" in Genesis 1:22, 28, 9:7, and in its variations in Scripture. In the construction *tarbût ʾanāšîm ḥaṭṭāʾîm* "a breed of sinful men," the Piel *qaṭṭāl* morphology characterizes the subject as repeatedly or regularly committing sinful acts (cf. Gen 13:13, 1 Kings 1:21, Isa 33:14). The form *ḥaṭṭāʾîm* frequently expresses the wisdom motif of wrongdoing in Psalms and Proverbs, as, for example, in Psalm 1:1: *ûbederek ḥaṭṭāʾîm lōʾ ʿāmad* "and in the path of the sinful he did not stay."

"to add yet more to YHWH's wrath toward Israel."

The Hebrew *lispôt ʿôd ʿal ḥarôn ʾap* YHWH *ʾel Yiśrāʾēl* "to add yet more to YHWH's wrath toward Israel" requires comment. The verb *sapah* in biblical Hebrew seems to express two originally differentiated roots: (a) *sāpāh* I "to reach an end, to be terminated" (cf. nominal *sôp* "end"), and (b) *sāpāh* II "to add to—, aggrandize," an alternative realization of the verb *y-ṣ-p* (see just below, in Notes to Num 31:15). The latter meaning is expressed here. Cf. Isaiah 30:30: "In order to add (*lemaʿan sepôt*) offense upon offense." Or, Isaiah 29:1: "Add year upon year (*sepû šānāh ʿal šānāh*)," and Jeremiah 7:21: "Add your burnt offerings upon your sacred meals (*sepû ʿōlôtêkem ʿal zibḥêkem*)." Note similar diction in the Mesha Stele lines 20–21 (Gibson 1971:75): "Then I seized it (= the town of Jahaz) in order to annex [it] to Dibon (*lspt ʿl Dybn*)." Use of the preposition *ʾel* instead of the more expected *ʿal* may reflect an attempt to vary the assonance of the verse.

15. *"Were you to go back on your commitment to him."* This verse responds to key themes expressed in the previous verses. In this way, *kî tešûbūn mē'ah-arāw* "were you to go back on your commitment to him" contrasts with *kî mille'û 'aḥarê*—"for they remained committed to—" (Num 32:12–13), and *weyāsap 'ôd* "so that he continues . . . further" compares with *lispôt 'ôd* "to add yet more to" in the previous verse, Numbers 32:14. Finally, *lehanîḥô bammidbār* "to abandon him in the wilderness," literally "to leave him there," sounds very much like *wayyenî'ēm bammidbār* "and he tossed them about in the wilderness" of Numbers 32:13.

16. *"We will build sheepfolds here."* The two tribes respond to Moses' rebuke by offering to participate in the conquest of Canaan before settling down in Transjordan, thereby meeting his principal objection. They say that they plan to build sheepfolds and fortified towns in Transjordan, where they will leave their wives and children to return to them only after the conquest of Canaan has been accomplished. They thus forego any claim to a *nahalah* west of the Jordan. The Hebrew *gidrōt sō'n* "sheepfolds" (1 Sam 24:4, Zeph 2:6) or *gedērōt leṣōna'alem* "folds for your sheep" below, in Numbers 32:24, is a way of characterizing the pastoral life attributed to the Transjordanian tribes. Hebrew *gādēr* connotes a fence or stone wall of a field, garden plot or orchard (Isa 5:5), whereas morphologically feminine **gedērāh* is reserved for sheepfolds. On the precise meaning of Hebrew *'îr* "town," see Notes to Numbers 35:2. The present statement does not precisely correlate with Numbers 32:33, below, which states that Moses granted the two and one-half tribes the towns of the land, implying that these towns already existed. The same implication is evident in Numbers 32:3, above, where presumably existing towns in Transjordan were likewise listed. Most likely, we are to see in Numbers 32:34–38 a resolution of the very imprecision that has been noted. The two and one-half tribes rebuilt or fortified these extant towns and renamed them, as did the Machirites in their region, according to Numbers 32:39–42. This would represent a nuance of the Hebrew verb *bānāh,* which can refer to the initial building of a town as well as to its rebuilding and fortification. The same nuance is characteristic of the Mesha Stele, lines 9–10, 18, 21–22, 27 (Gibson 1971:74–75), where we read repeatedly: *w'bn/wybn* "I/He built, rebuilt, fortified" in recounting the projects of both Moabite and Israelite kings. According to Numbers 21, the Israelites conquered these regions of Transjordan and in the process undoubtedly destroyed some of the walls and fortifications. What the Gadites and Reubenites are saying is that they will repair the towns so that their families may remain protected in them while their men are away fighting, and that they will provide ample sheepfolds for their livestock.

17. *"we will swiftly deploy as an armed force."* On the connotation of the Hebrew Niphal *nēḥālēṣ* "we shall deploy" and the term *ḥālûṣ* "armed fighting man," collectively "armed force," see Notes to Numbers 31:3. These same

locutions recur in Numbers 32:20–21, 27, 29–30, below. The Hebrew *ḥûšîm*, from the root *ḥ-w-š*, connotes alacrity, as in 1 Sam 20:38: *mehērāh, ḥûšāh, ʿal taʿamōd* "Quick! Hurry up! Don't stop!" The form *ḥûšîm* is unique to this verse, and would seem to be a participial form, an alternative to **ḥāšîm* "speeding," singular *ḥāš* (Isa 8:1, 3, Hab 1:8, Deut 32:5). Once again, the Transjordanian tribes will deploy "in advance of" their fellow Israelites.

"in the fortified towns"

The most frequent type of town mentioned in the Hebrew Bible is the fortified town, *ʿîr mibṣār*, plural *ʿārê mibṣār* (1 Sam 6:18, 2 Kings 3:19, 17:9, 18:8, Jos 10:20, 19:35, and see the Comments to Numbers 35). The fortified towns of Transjordan will protect the families of the tribesmen "from" (*mippenê*) the inhabitants of the land while they were away fighting across the Jordan in Canaan.

18. *"We will not return to our homes."* The Transjordanian Israelites pledge not to return to their homes until the Cisjordanian Israelites have taken possession of their *naḥalāh* "estate." The Hithpael *hitnaḥēl* usually means "to be enfranchised, to be granted, or take possession of a *naḥalāh*" (Num 33:54, 34:13, Ezek 47:13). The cognate-accusative syntax *hitnaḥēl naḥalāh* "to take possession of an estate," is limited to this passage, and predicates active-transitive force for the Hithpael. Speaking of non-Israelite slaves, Leviticus 25:46 states: *wehitnaḥaltem ʾōtām libnêkem* "you may pass them on as property to your children." Or, Isaiah 14:2, again speaking of non-Israelites: "And the House of Israel shall possess them (*wehitnaḥalûm*) on the land of YHWH as slaves."

19. *"For we will not receive our estate together with them."* In this verse, the simple stem is used: "For we will not receive our estate (*kî lōʾ ninḥal*) together with them." In the Hebrew clause *kî bāʾāh naḥalātēnû ʾēlênû*, the form *bāʾāh*, stressed penultimately by the Masoretes, has the force of the future perfect: "for we will have [already] received our estate." The Transjordanian Israelites are saying, in effect, that they will forego claim to any territory in Canaan west of the Jordan after its conquest because they will already have received their estate east of the Jordan provisionally in advance of their taking part in the conquest of Canaan.

The special sense of idiomatic *bāʾ ʾel* "to gain, receive, come into the possession of" has been clarified by Y. Muffs (1992:97–103), who explains it as a Hebrew locution corresponding to Egyptian Aramaic *ʿl ʿl* (= *ʿāl ʿāl*) "it has entered into; came into the possession of—" To be specific, the Aramaic verb ʿ-l-l "to enter" is the semantic equivalent of Hebrew *bāʾ*. The precise formula *ʿl ʿl* occurs in Aramaic marriage contracts from Elephantine dating from the fifth century B.C.E. where we read: "I have paid you the *mohar* (= bridal payment) of your daughter So-and-So in such-and-such amount; you have received it (*ʿl ʿlyk*, and your heart is satisfied with it." (Porten-Yardeni 1989:30, B2.6, lines 4–6; and cf. ibid., 78, B3.8, lines 4–5). To this Muffs compares the words of the one in charge of Joseph's household to the brothers of Joseph: ***kaspekem bāʾ ʾēlay*** "I have received your silver" (Gen 43:23). The same nuance may be conveyed in 1 Kings 10:14: "And the weight of the gold that was *taken in* by Solomon (*ʾašer bāʾ li-Šelōmōh*) in one year amounted to six hundred sixty talents of gold." In a more general way, the parallel Akkadian verb, ***erēbu*** "to enter," and its derivative *irbu* "income," may connote goods or income received, as in the form of taxes (CAD E:265–266, s.v. meaning d) 1'–3', CAD I:174, s.v. *irbu*, meaning 2, "income"). It is characteristic of legal formulas to reorient perspective so that, in the present case, what started out by expressing "entering" ends up speaking of what has been received.

Geographical contrast is expressed by reference to the two "sides" of the Jordan. Thus, *mēʿēber layyardēn wahālʾāh* "across the Jordan and beyond" refers to Cisjordan, and *mēʿēber hayyardēn mizrāḥāh* "on the eastern side of the Jordan" to Transjordan.

20. Here begin the terms or conditions under which the Transjordanian tribes were to be granted their request. Two versions of the negotiation are preserved: (1) Numbers 32:20–27, a version with only one priestly locution, the term *ʾaḥuzzāh* "acquired estate" in Numbers 32:22b, which may be a gloss (see below). This version resonates with Deuteronomy, though it may hark back to JE; in tone, it sounds like Numbers 32:16–19 above; and (2) Numbers 32:28–32, which can be regarded as a consistently priestly passage. In each version, binary contingencies are projected, and we are told the opposing consequences of fulfillment of commitments versus failure to fulfill them. Thus we read: *ʾim taʿaśûn* "If you do—" and in Numbers 32:23: *weʾim lōʾ taʿaśûn* "But if you do not do—." In the rhetoric of the Talmudic Sages such formulation was termed *tenaʾi kāpûl* "a double condition," namely, one that spells out both positive and negative outcomes, a requirement imposed by the Sages on all provisional contracts or agreements if they were to be binding. The Mishnah (*Qiddûšîn* 3:4) actually cites the more legalistic, priestly formulation of Numbers 32:29–30, below, as its model:

> Rabbi Meir says: Any condition that is not [formulated] like the condition of the Gadites and the Reubenites is not a [binding] condition. As it is said: "Moses said to them: 'If the Gadites and the Reubenites cross over,' " and it is written: 'But if they do not cross over as armed men.' " Rabbi Hananiah, son of Gamaliel, says: It was necessary to spell out the matter, for if not so, the verse would be taken to mean that these would not have received a *naḥalāh* even in the land of Canaan.

"if you will deploy as an armed force"

The Niphal *hēḥālēṣ* "to be deployed as an armed force" is explained in the Notes to Numbers 31:3, and occurs above in Numbers 32:17. The expression *lipnê YHWH* "before/in the presence of YHWH" recurs frequently in this section of the narrative, Numbers 32:20–32, and constitutes a virtual *Leitmotif.* It contrasts with *lipnê ʿadat/benê Yiśrāʾēl* "before the community/people of Israel" encountered above, in Numbers 32:4, and again in Numbers 32:17. The enemies of the Israelites and the lands they inhabit are said to fall either "before" the onslaught of the Israelites, or "before" the power of YHWH. This theme is related to the power of God's countenance, and ultimately derives from biblical epic, which depicts the God of Israel as marching ahead of the Israelite forces to repulse its enemies who are at the same time God's enemies. See Notes to Numbers 21:14 on "the wars of YHWH," and cf. Deuteronomy 1:30: "It is YHWH, your God, who marches in advance of you (*hahōlēk lipnêkem*); he will do battle for you" (cf. Deut 1:33, 31:6–8).

But, when the God of Israel is angered, and abandons Israel for the time, the Psalmist complains: "But you have abandoned and shamed us, and you do not go to war in the ranks of our armies (*welōʾ tēṣēʾ beṣibʾōtênû*)" (Ps 44:10, 60:12, 108:12). In contrast, when relations between Israel and its God are salutary, the people are told that it is "YHWH, your God, who marches with you" (*hahōlēk ʿimmākem;* Deut 20:4). The projected location of the deity in battle thus varies between *lipnê* "in advance of—" and *ʾim* "together with." It may also be expressed by prepositional *beth* "among, within."

In the section contained within Numbers 32:20–32, prepositional *lipnê* is subtly nuanced. Here, in Numbers 32:20, the Transjordanian tribes are told that they must deploy "in advance of YHWH to do battle (*lipnê YHWH lammilḥāmāh*)." The same language is repeated in Numbers 32:27, 29, 32. But, in Numbers 32:17, above, the language was different: "We will swiftly deploy as an armed force in advance of the Israelite people (*lipnê benê Yiśrāʾēl*)." This is also the formulation in Deuteronomy 3:18b (see just below). The two formulations are obviously parallel in meaning, leading to the conclusion that YHWH and the Israelite forces are visualized as marching side by side, or together, with the Transjordanian tribesmen being positioned ahead of, or in advance of them, in front of them. Symmetrically, these would be positioned in advance of the God of Israel in the alternative formulations of the same projected scene as stated in Numbers 32:20–32. In turn, this means that in the view of whoever gave us Numbers 32:20–32, or compiled its parts, the Transjordanian forces did not have the God of Israel marching ahead of them or alongside them; they were on their own! God was marching with the main body of Israelites who were, after all, fulfilling the preferred undertaking, the settlement of Canaan, the Promised Land. For their part, the Transjordanian tribes marched in front of the others to show their commitment, to face the enemy first?

21. *"and every armed man of yours . . . until he drives out his enemies from his presence."* As explained in the Introduction to Numbers 32, idiomatic *ʿābar*

ḥālûṣ/ḥalûṣîm "to cross over as armed fighters" recalls Deuteronomy 3:18b: "You shall cross over as armed fighters (*ta ʿaberû ḥalûṣîm*) in advance of your kinsmen, the Israelites, all the warriors." The Hiphil stem, *hôrîs*, connotes dispossession or deportation. Its functional force will be explained in Notes to Numbers 33:53–56, a major statement on the policy to be followed by the Israelites in Canaan. In this, the priestly writers took their cue from Deuteronomy. As was true of prepositional *lipnê*, so with respect to prepositional *mippenê* "from before—" the scene is one in which the God of Israel repulses the enemy (cf. the usage in Num 10:35, Ps 68:2). The enemies of Israel are the enemies of the God of Israel, "his enemies" (*ʾōyebāw*).

22. After the Land of Canaan is subdued, the Transjordanian Israelites may return to their acquired estate in Transjordan. They will then be "cleared, free" (the Hebrew *neqiyyîm*) of further obligation. Usage of the Hebrew verb *nāqāh* "to be clean" is almost consistently legal or moral. It connotes physical cleanliness only in such forms as *niqyôn šinnayim* "cleanness of teeth," parallel with *ḥōser leḥem* "want of food" (Amos 4:6), or in the term *menaqqiyyōt* "a cleaning, or storage utensil" (see Notes to Num 4:7; Levine 1993:167). For the rest, the sense is always that of being guiltless, cleared of charges, vindicated, free of obligations, and the like. Even the metaphors of Psalm 24:4 are to be understood in this way: "One whose palms are clean (*neqî kappayim*) and whose heart is pure (*ûbar lēbāb*)." The formulation of this verse, *nāqî min* "free from, cleared of—" most closely resembles those of Genesis 24:41, 44:10, Jos 2:17, 19–20, 2 Sam 3:28, in all of which the stative participle, *nāqî*, connotes the fulfillment of the terms of an oath or promise. Similarly, finite verbal forms, in several stems, connote vindication from guilt or clearance of obligations (cf. Gen 24:8, Exod 21:19, and see Notes to Num 5:19; Levine 1993:197, and Notes to Num 14:18; Levine 1993:366).

The second part of the present verse, Numbers 32:22b, in which the distinctly priestly term *ʾaḥuzzāh* "acquired estate" occurs may be a gloss, because the text would read smoothly without it, and it is the only priestly locution in Numbers 32:20–27.

23. *"But if you do not act accordingly."* The negative alternative, projecting failure to fulfill commitments, echoes Numbers 32:20, the positive alternative. If these tribes do not do their part they will have offended YHWH, expressed by the Hebrew verb *hataʾ*. Such offense would bring punishment, Hebrew *ḥaṭṭāʾt*. The Masoretes pointed consonantal *ḥṭʾṭkm* as a Piel with augmented second radical: *ḥaṭṭāʾtkem* "your punishment," but more likely it represents a noun based on the simple stem, *ḥaṭaʾtkem*, a declined form of the noun *ḥaṭāʾāh* "offense" (Gen 20:9, Exod 32:21). Here we have a classic instance of act and consequence, of sin and punishment, wherein the same verb or noun connotes both the act and its result (see Notes to Num 18:1; Levine 1993:439–440).

"that will overtake you!"

The verb *māṣā'* often connotes "arriving, overtaking," rather than locating, or finding in the usual sense (see Notes to Num 35:26, and cf. similar themes in Deut 4:30, 31:17, Ps 119:143).

24–27. The terms of the negotiation are rephrased. Formulaic *wehayyōṣē' mippikem ta'asu* "That which departs from your lips—fulfill!" recalls the fateful words of Jepthah's daughter to her father: "Do unto me what departed from your mouth (*'aśēh lî ka'ašer yāṣā' mippîkā*)" (Judg 11:36). This is the language of vows and oaths. Thus, Numbers 30:3: *kekol hayyōṣē' mippîw ya'aśeh* "He shall fulfill all that departed from his mouth." (Num 30:3). The pledge of the two tribes had the force of a vow (cf. Deut 23:24). Idiomatic *ka'ašer 'adōnî dōbēr* "As my lord speaks," is expressed alternatively in Numbers 32:31, below. The simple stem *dōbēr* "speaks" is a form utilized in conversation (Exod 6:29, Deut 5:1, Jer 28:7). Note that the singular *ḥālûṣ ṣābā'* "armed combatant" is expressed in the plural, *ḥalûṣê ṣābā'*, in Numbers 31:5.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 32:28–32: A BRIEF PRIESTLY VERSION

28. *Then Moses gave instructions to them, joined by Eleazar, the priest.* Here begins the one consistently priestly passage in Numbers 32, extending through Numbers 32:32. Moses is joined by the Israelite leadership in addressing the Transjordanian tribes. This is the force of *'et* "with" in an admittedly unusual syntax. The leadership is envisioned in the priestly configuration—Eleazar, the priest, Joshua, son of Nun, "and the heads of the patriarchal tribes of the Israelites" (*werā'šê 'abôt hammaṭṭôt libnê Yiśrā'ēl;* cf. Jos 14:1, 19:51), a proliferate designation embodying the more common ingredients of priestly social terminology (see Notes to Num 1:2; Levine 1993:130–133).

29–32. The terms of the dispensation to the two tribes are restated. In Numbers 32:30, the Niphal form *wenō'ḥazû* "let them acquire their estate" is denominative of the term *'aḥuzzāh*. Cf. Genesis 34:10: *wehē'āḥazû bah* "and acquire estates in it." If the two tribes fail to fulfill their commitments, they would not be allowed to settle in Transjordan, which is what they sought, but would have to be content with an estate in Canaan, proper, in the midst of their fellow Israelites. In Numbers 32:32, we find a restatement of Numbers 32:19, above, to the effect that the two tribes, in accepting the dispensation, would also be relinquishing their claim to an estate in Canaan having already received one in Transjordan. The *waw* in the formulation *we'ittānû 'aḥuzzāt naḥalātēnû* is circumstantial: "our received, acquired estate being in our possession," literally "with us." On the composite term *'aḥuzzat naḥalāh,* see Notes to Numbers 27:7.

It must be understood that these terms are really intended to legitimate the Israelite communities of Transjordan by the authority of Moses and the Israelite leaders. It is implied that Moses and the other leaders would have forcefully prevented those tribes from settling in Transjordan if they had not participated in the conquest of Canaan.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 32:33–38: THE OFFICIAL GRANT OF LAND IN TRANSJORDAN

33. This is the official statement of grant to the now two and one-half tribes. As already noted, the classification of the clan of Machir (see below, in Num 32:39–42) as "one-half of the tribe of Manasseh" resonates with Deuteronomy 3:12–13. Reference to the former kingdoms of Sihon and Og carries us back to Numbers 21, and calls to mind the frequent mention of these entities in Deuteronomy 1–4, frequently in Joshua, and in Judges 11. The designation *Menaššeh ben Yôsēp* "Manasseh, son of Joseph" is also found in Numbers 27:1, in the genealogy of the daughters of Zelophehad, and in Numbers 36:12, in the same context (cf. Jos 17:2, 17).

the land inclusive of its towns

Prepositional *lamed* in *hā'āreṣ le'ārêhā* has the sense of "including, according to, reckoned by," hence: "the land inclusive of its towns." Cf. Numbers 24:2: "And he beheld Israel encamped by its tribes" (*lišebāṭāw*). Or Numbers 34:2: "The land of Canaan according to/inclusive of its borders" (*ligebullōtêhā*). The Hebrew *bigebūllōt hā'āreṣ sābîb* literally means "within the borders of the land, all around." In other words, the two and one-half tribes were granted the land with all of its towns, within the borders of the land.

34–36. Eight towns that were rebuilt or fortified by the Gadites are listed. As already noted, the Hebrew verb *bānāh* "to build," when said of towns, often has the functional meaning of rebuilding, usually by restoring wall and towers; hence "to fortify" (see above, in Notes to Num 32:16). The towns of Dibon, Ataroth, Jazer and Beth-Nimrah appeared in the list of Numbers 32:3, above, and have already been identified. The present list differentiates Gadite from Reubenite settlements, and lists the above towns, plus four additional ones, as Gadite. The four additional Gadite towns are: (1) Atroth-Shophan (*'Aṭrōt Šôpān*), which has not been identified. The name is probably intended to designate a daughter town near Ataroth, also located in Gadite territory (Romero 1992, in *ABD* I:522–523); (2) Jogbehah (*Yogbehāh*) has been identified by many geographers with Rugm al-Gubeha, an Ammonite fortress, on the easternmost boundary between Gad and Reuben. It is mentioned in Judges 8:11, in a narrative of Gideon's battle with the Midianites (Jud 8:10–21), where the town of Nobah is also mentioned. That story suggests that Jogbehah was located near a caravan route of the nomadic tent-dwellers. Some have identified it with nearby Tel Safut (Franklyn 1992, in *ABD* III:880); and (3) Beth-Haran (*Bêt Hārān*) is most likely a variant spelling of Hebrew *Bêt Hārām*, the name given to a valley in the territory of Gad in Joshua 13:27. It is not uncommon for names to identify both specific towns and the districts in which they are located, as is the case with the name Gilead (see Notes to Num 32:1, above). This site has been provisionally identified as Tell Iktanu/Ikhtenu, on the southern side of Wadi er-Rameh, where excavations have been undertaken (Franklyn 1992, in *ABD* I:687). Taken together, the eight Gadite towns listed here range all the way from Dibon and Aroer in southern Gilead to Jazer and Beth-Nimrah to the north. These fortified towns had nearby sheepfolds.

37–38. The six Reubenite towns are here listed, including one unmentioned in Numbers 32:3, above. Note that here, previously misspelled *Beʿōn* is correctly spelled *Baʿal Meʿōn*, and that previously written *Śebām* is written *Śibṃāh*. The additional Reubenite town is Kiriathaim (*Qiryātayim*), which means "double-town," expressing the typology of dual toponyms. It is also listed in Joshua 13:19, and in the Mesha inscription, line 10, as having been rebuilt by that king, and is targeted in oracles against Moab in Jeremiah 48:1, 23 and Ezekiel 25:9, of the early sixth century B.C.E. It has not been positively identified, and suggestions have included el-Qereiyat, near Dibon, Khirbet el-Qureiyeh and Qaryat el-Mekhayet, both west of Medeba (Mattingly 1992, in *ABD* IV:85). The towns identified here as Reubenite are clustered around Heshbon and Medeba.

The Hebrew idiom *mûsabbōt šēm* "whose names were switched" is unique to this verse. Elsewhere, *mûsabbōt*, the Hophal feminine participle of the root *s-b-b* "to encircle" means "encircled" (Exod 28:11, 49:6, 13, Ezek 41:24), and is artistically or architecturally descriptive. The giving of names to towns and places, as to persons, is usually conveyed in biblical Hebrew by the formula *qārāʾ (be)šēm* "to call (by) name," here *wayyiqreʾû bešēmōt ʾet šemōt heʿārîm*, literally "They called by names the names of the towns" (cf. Gen 4:17, 26:22).

NOTES TO NUMBERS 32:39–42: AN EARLY RECORD OF MACHIRITE SETTLEMENT

39. Here begins the concluding record of Numbers 32, taken from a separate source. It relates that the sons (or descendants) of Machir, son of Manas-

seh, proceeded to Gilead and conquered it. In the Introduction to Numbers 32 it was explained that this record does not correlate with Numbers 32:1–4 and 29, which state that Gad and Reuben settled in Gilead. Machir and his clan have already been encountered in Numbers 26:28–34, and reappear in Numbers 27:1. In Notes to Numbers 26:29, the various biblical genealogies of Manasseh are reviewed, and more is said about the unique situation affecting the tribe of Manasseh as the only one holding territory both east and west of the Jordan. In the genealogical traditions, Gilead is a person, a descendant of Manasseh through Machir. Whereas the initially contested claim of Manasseh to land west of the Jordan is addressed in Numbers 26–27, in the context of the suit pressed by the daughters of Zelophehad, it was left to Numbers 32:39–42 to record the granting of Gilead to this tribe.

went to the Gilead and captured it

The verb *lākad* "to conquer" most often refers to conquest of a town, as has been noted. The Machirites "dispossessed, drove out" (Hebrew *wayyôreš*) the Amorites who inhabited Gilead. The verb *hôrîš* has already been encountered in Numbers 32:21, above. Cf. the parallel wording in Numbers 21:32, an account of the conquest of Jazer in the land of Gilead, where the Notes explain the significance of the verb *hôrîš*, which expresses a policy of deportation. The identity of the Amorites of Transjordan at the time of the Israelite conquest, as projected in the JE historiography, has been discussed at some length at the Comments to Numbers 21.

40. *Then Moses granted the Gilead to Machir.* As is customary, an official statement of grant is affixed as was true above, in Numbers 32:33. The Machirite clan then settled the area.

41–42. *the farming villages of Ham.* Another Manassite named Jair (*Yā'îr*), known from Deuteronomy 3:14, Joshua 13:30 and 1 Kings 4:13, conquered farming villages in Transjordan. The Hebrew term *ḥawwah* is limited in biblical literature to passages associated with *ḥawwōt Yā'îr* "the Farming Villages of Jair" (add to the above Judg 10:4, 1 Chron 2:23). This term occurs in Punic as *ḥwh,* with the probable meaning of "town, borough, settlement" (see Hoftijzer-Jongeling 1995:353, s.v. *ḥwh*-2, and see *HALAT*:284, s.v. *ḥawwāh* I, for other possible, but uncertain cognates). The Masoretic reading, *ḥawwōtêhem,* presumably "their farming villages" lacks an antecedent. A note in the *NJPS* translation, s.v. Numbers 32:41, calls attention to a place name, Ham, in Genesis 14:5, which would by context be located in Transjordan precisely in the region of Shaveh-Kiriathaim (= Kiriathaim) just mentioned, in Num 32:37. It is therefore suggested to divide consonantal *ḥwtyhm* into *ḥwt-hm* and read: "He captured the farming villages of Ham ('et ḥawwōt Ḥām)." Note the variant *'ethen* for *'ōtān* "them" (feminine), and cf. the same form in Exodus 20:22, where the antecedent is feminine plural *'abānîm* "stones."

There is considerable though inconsistent information about the region known as Havvoth-Jair. According to Deuteronomy 3:14, these villages comprised the "the district of Argob" (Hebrew *ḥebel ʾArgôb*), reaching to the border of the district of Geshur and the territory of the Maachites in the Bashan. There are differing traditions as to how many villages comprised this district, ranging from twenty-three to sixty, making it a large district, by all calculations.

Like Jair, another Manassite named Nobah (*Nōbaḥ*) conquered the town of Kenath (*Qenāt*) and renamed it after himself. The place name Kenath appears in the Egyptian Execration Texts in an itinerary of Thutmose III, and in the Amarna letters, and was later known as Kanatha, one of the towns of the Decapolis. It is provisionally identified with el-Qanawat near Es-Suweidiya, Syria (Mattingly 1992, in *ABD* IV:16–17, s.v. Kenath). In a passage containing only four verses we are thus afforded a glimpse of early historiography that links up with other traditions on the Israelite conquest and settlement of Transjordan, a subject that continues to fascinate biblical authors.

COMMENTS

The pivotal position of Numbers 32 within the Book of Numbers has been noted in the Introduction to this chapter. Numbers 32 takes up where Numbers 21 left off, and proceeds to establish the legitimacy of the Transjordanian Israelite communities. The history of these communities was reviewed in considerable detail in the Comments to Numbers 21. What must concern us in commenting on Numbers 32 is the way that the territorial legitimacy of the two and one-half tribes, Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh (variously, the Machirite clan), is treated. It is conceived as a special dispensation to the tribes involved, who were really supposed to cross the Jordan and settle in Canaan proper, but were excused from doing so by Moses under the terms of a negotiation granting them territories in Transjordan. This dispensation remains a matter of ongoing concern to other biblical writers.

Historically, the Transjordanian Israelite communities flourished from early times until the Assyrian deportations, which began in 734 B.C.E. and continued until 721 B.C.E. Just when the Israelite communities of Transjordan originated is an open question, but there are indications that their beginnings may go back as early as the Cisjordanian Israelite settlement, which probably occurred between the late twelfth to early tenth centuries B.C.E. During the reign of David, in the tenth century, there may have been some expansion of Israelite settlement in Transjordan, and thereafter, in the early ninth century B.C.E. Omri and his successors added considerably to the Israelite presence there. We are dealing, therefore, with a network of Transjordanian Israelite communities that were joined to the northern kingdom of Israel for at least two hundred years, with a probable earlier history of settlement, as well. Map 1 shows the extent of Israelite habitation in Transjordan throughout most of the ninth century B.C.E.

The objective of the following Comments is to interpret Numbers 32 in historical as well as ideological terms, and to define its relationship to biblical sources outside Numbers, including prophecy, narrative and historiography, wherein various attitudes toward the Transjordanian Israelite communities, approving and disapproving, are expressed. An attempt will be made to account for the persistent involvement of biblical authors in this subject.

COMMENT 1: ISRAELITE SETTLEMENT IN TRANSJORDAN: LEGITIMATE BY DISPENSATION

The earliest biblical sources on the Israelite settlement and/or conquest of regions in Transjordan are unaware of any special problem of legitimacy. This is probably because these sources antedate certain conceptions of the Promised Land, or of Canaan, which delimit this land area to include most of Cisjordanian Canaan, but excluding most of Transjordan. This lack of awareness is characteristic of Numbers 21:4–35, a record by JE of the Israelite conquest and settlement of Transjordan, with the Heshbon Ballad and other early poetic fragments imbedded in it. The entire campaign is depicted heroically as an Israelite victory over the Amorites. Following the conquest and deportation of the population, the Israelites proceeded to settle the lands they had conquered, as was to be expected (Num 21:25, 31, 35). The eighth-century prophet, Amos, was undoubtedly referring to the Transjordanian victory over Sihon, the Amorite king, when he stated:

> (All this after) I, verily I, destroyed the Amorites before their advance;
> Whose height equaled the height of cedars,
> And who was mighty as oaks.
> (After) I, verily I destroyed his fruit from above,
> And his roots down below. (Amos 2:9)

After all, the principal Amorite satellite kingdom of the early Iron Age was located in Transjordan (see the Comments to Num 21). Similarly, other relatively early poetic references to Transjordanian Israelites relate to them as full-fledged kinfolk. Thus, Deuteronomy 33:6, 20–21, express the hope that Reuben will grow in population, and speak of Gad as a blessed tribe successfully expanding its territory. The Song of Deborah praises Machir and Gilead, settled *beʿēber hayyardēn* "in Transjordan" for their great leaders and for responding to the call to arms, and even Reuben, criticized for lagging in response to the call, is praised nonetheless. There is surely no intent to impugn any of the Transjordanian tribes, as such, because some of the Cisjordanian tribes were also criticized in the same vein (Judg 5:14–17). In fact, the Song of Deborah testifies to the formation of a tribal confederation reaching into Transjordan, though ironically, not into certain Cisjordanian regions. Furthermore, patriarchal narratives of fairly early vintage relate important events that transpired in Transjordan. In Genesis 31–33, we read of Jacob's adventures in Mahanaim, Sukkoth and Penuel, where he experienced theophanies, and most significant of all, where he offered acceptable sacrifices just as he was accustomed to do west of the Jordan.

It is true that in the JE material of Numbers and in the Balaam Pericope, as in Judges 11, a clear resonance of the early narratives and poems of Numbers, one notes sensitivity to the issue of the Transjordanian conquest per se. However, such justification is no different in its thrust from what the Bible has to say about the Israelite conquest and settlement of Canaan west of the Jordan. Throughout the historical books, once we get past the obviously late passages in Joshua (such as Joshua 22, for instance), we find little if any indication that the Israelites of Gilead and Bashan were of questionable legitimacy because of where they lived. They were Israelites like all others, usually treated by prophets, narrators and historiographers as part of the tribal network, related by family ties and political connections to the Israelites of Canaan west of the Jordan. Whatever internecine conflicts are recorded between Israelites east and west of the Jordan are really no different from those occurring among Israelite tribes in Cisjordan.

The agenda of Numbers 32 marks a departure from this point of view. In all of its various strata, which are admittedly difficult to identify, Numbers 32 introduces the issue of legitimacy, which gains strength as the chapter unfolds. On the primary level, Numbers 32 explains that the tribes of Reuben and Gad found the regions of Jazer and Gilead well suited to their pastoral pursuits and announced to Moses that they wished to settle there. In loyal fashion, they offered to fight alongside their fellow Israelites until these subdued their "place" (Hebrew *māqôm*) in Canaan west of the Jordan. They forewent any claim to territory west of the Jordan. According to plan, these two tribes would build sheepfolds and fortify towns in Transjordan where they would leave their livestock and children while they were away fighting the Canaanites alongside their brothers. This is what is stated in Numbers 32:1, 16–21, and we note that Numbers 32:39–42, an early source, was tacked on at the end of the chapter to account for Manassite settlement in Gilead and Bashan. This is schematized as "half the tribe of Manasseh" in Numbers 32:33, an anticipatory statement coming out of the blue. So it is that, curiously, half of the tribe of Manasseh has been granted its territory by Moses before there is any mention of that group at all! Moses' role as grantor of territories is resumed in Numbers 32:40, where he grants the region of Gilead to Machir. The point to be made is that the very need to rationalize the Transjordanian settlements in a way that satisfies the conquest program of Cisjordanian Canaan is a significant development.

Thematically, the signal that the Promised Land, the land to which the Israelites were marching, is identified as Canaan west of the Jordan, comes in references to "crossing the Jordan" as a way of expressing entry into the land. Though this depiction dominates most of Deuteronomy, it is particularly characteristic of the Deuteronomist, and it may very well be redactional even in those sections regarded as part of core Deuteronomy. Moses' farewell oration to Israel is addressed to a people encamped just east of the Jordan, opposite Jericho. They have been brought all this way so as to cross over into their land. This enterprise overrides the Transjordanian campaigns and, in effect, differentiates between the two lands. Thus, Deuteronomy 12:10:

> You shall cross the Jordan (*wa‘abartem ’et hayyardēn*) and settle down in the land (*bā’āreṣ*) which YHWH, your God, is granting to you as an estate, and he will give you safe haven from all of your enemies all around, and you will dwell in security.

Similar language occurs repeatedly in Deuteronomy, most noticeably in Deuteronomy 1–4, the work of the Deuteronomist. Thus, Moses pleads: "Let me, I beg you, cross over and see this beautiful land which is across the Jordan (*’ašer be‘ēber hayyardēn*), this beautiful mountain range, and the Lebanon" (Deut 3:25). In many ways, the narratives of Deuteronomy 1–4, and following, have a direct bearing on the interpretation of Numbers 32. The formula *ḥaṣî šēbeṭ hammenaššeh* "half of the tribe of Manasseh" originates in Deuteronomy 3:13, in a passage that reviews the Israelite adventures in Transjordan. Beginning in Deuteronomy 2:31 with a commemoration of the victory over the Amorites of Transjordan, Moses proceeds to relate that he granted to Reuben and Gad half of Gilead; the rest of Gilead and all of the Bashan he granted to half of the tribe of Manasseh. The text goes on to specify, by integrating Numbers 32:39–42 into the narrative, that Jair, son of Manasseh, took possession of certain parts of that region alongside Machir, repeating that the two tribes, Reuben and Gad, took southern Gilead all the way to the Arnon (Deut 3:14–16).

There are earlier traditions that more or less imply that Israel's promised land lay west of the Jordan. Thus, in the JE sections of Numbers 13, we read that the spies are sent into the central Judean mountain range to reconnoiter "the land" (*’et hā’āreṣ*; Num 13:16). They were charged as follows: "Observe the land (*'et hā'āreṣ*; Num 13:18)." It is only when the Israelites are told, in Numbers 14:25, that the Amalekites are strongly entrenched in the Negeb that they are compelled to embark on the circuitous route that brought them into Transjordan from the Gulf of Elath.

Nevertheless, the agenda of legitimacy central to Numbers 32 most clearly derives from the Deuteronomist. As a matter of fact, the formula *'ābar 'et hayardēn* "to cross the Jordan," and variations of the same, occur most often in the writings of the Deuteronomist, and this diction was appropriated by certain priestly writers in Numbers and elsewhere, including in Numbers 32.

It would be interesting, nevertheless, to probe the occurrence of the phrase *'ābar 'et hayyardēn* "to cross the Jordan" in Genesis 32:10, which appears to be an exception, because discrete biblical diction is always relevant. As Genesis 31 ends, Jacob is at Mahanaim in Gilead, on his way back from Haran, after averting an attack by Laban. The delegation he dispatched to Esau in Seir to attempt a reconciliation with his brother had been unsuccessful, however, returning with the threat of attack from that quarter. Jacob then prayed to the God of his fathers:

> God of my father, Abraham, and God of my father, Isaac; the one who commanded me: "Return to your land, and to your place of birth and I will deal generously with you." I am unworthy of all the kindnesses that you have faithfully shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan river, and now I have grown into two camps! Deliver me, I pray, from the power of my brother, from the power of Esau; else, I fear, he may come and strike me down, mothers and children alike. Did you not say: "I will be exceedingly generous to you, and make your descendants as the sands of the sea that are too numerous to be counted." (Gen 32:9–12)

The appeal of Jacob's prayer rests on the fact that he has, indeed, returned to his land in obedience to the God of his fathers, and should not have had to fear any longer. And yet, he was still threatened by Esau! He is grateful for God's bounty, because he is now much wealthier than he was when he had crossed the Jordan on his northeasterly journey to Haran. The point is that he is voicing this indebtedness while still in Gilead, before crossing back over the Jordan!

Unmistakably, Genesis 31 served, inter alia, as an etiology on the provenance of Gilead as part of northern Israel, or, to put it another way, on the right of Israel to Gilead, a statement that we would logically expect in a source exhibiting features of the Elohist. What this narrative may mean is that the Arameans ceded Gilead to Jacob/Israel, and withdrew their forces. As such, Genesis 31 sounds very much like an early or mid-eighth century B.C.E. source, whose outlook carries through Genesis 32, and is expressed in the words of

Jacob's prayer. One may hypothesize that such attitudes antedate the writings of the Deuteronomist.

COMMENT 2: THE FORMATION OF NUMBERS 32

As analyzed above, the primary level of Numbers 32, apart from Numbers 32:39–42, which antedate the legitimacy issue, is represented by Numbers 32:1, 16–21, which rationalize Moses' grant of Transjordanian territories to the two and one-half tribes on the grounds that this will not impede the Israelite conquest program west of the Jordan, which is assumed to be the principal endeavor. At the very least, it was to be the necessary forthcoming phase. This is in line with the view expressed in Deuteronomy 3:18–20, where Moses is said to have commanded these tribes to do their duty alongside their brothers, and only then to return permanently to their homes and livestock in Transjordan. Source-critical analysis suggests that the Deuteronomist utilized the early material on the Machirite clan in Numbers 32, but that subsequently, a later author, or authors, returned the compliment by utilizing statements of the Deuteronomist. This would have been true in regard to the Deuteronomistic phrase "half of the tribe of Manasaeh" (compare Num 32:33 with Deut 3:13), and also with respect to usage of the characterization *ḥālûṣ* "armed fighter," and the related Niphal form *nēḥālēṣ* "we shall deploy as an armed force" (Num 32:17, 26, 29–30, 32), taken and adapted from Deuteronomy 3:18. Usage of the verb *hôrîš* "to depopulate, deport" in Numbers 32:21 resonates with the diction of the Deuteronomic school from its early phases and through its offshoots in Judges 1 and in Kings (see Notes to Num 32:21, 39).

The next phase in arguing legitimacy is the work of priestly writers, whose input pervades Numbers 32:2–15, 22–32. In these passages, the mere request to remain in Transjordan is regarded as an offense comparable in its severity to the refusal of the previous generation to undertake the conquest program, in the first place (see Notes to Num 32:6, and following). Characteristically priestly are the following features: the formula of obedience in Numbers 32:24, references to the land as an *'aḥuzzāh* "acquired estate" and the role assigned to Eleazar, the priest.

COMMENT 3: FURTHER PREOCCUPATION WITH THE TRANSJORDANIAN ISRAELITES

Notice has already been taken of the reference to Numbers 32 occurring in Numbers 34:13–15, which explains that the map of the Promised Land was meant to include only the territories of nine and one-half tribes, the remaining two and one-half tribes having already received their estates in Transjordan.

Preoccupation with the two and one-half tribes dominates certain sections of Joshua, some of which show literary dependency on Numbers 32, while others point directly to the writings of the Deuteronomist, and to other earlier sources. Thus, Joshua 1:12–18, a speech in which Joshua addresses the two and one-half tribes, sounds utterly Deuteronomistic, except for is innovations, and for the locution *ḥamūššîm* "girded for battle" (Jos 1:14), which resonates with Exodus 13:18 (cf Judg 7:11), and is resonated, in turn, by Joshua 4:12, but nowhere occurs in Numbers or Deuteronomy. Most notably, Joshua 1:15 closely paraphrases Deuteronomy 3:20, and employs the term *yeruššāh* to connote "possession, inheritance" (cf. Deut 2:5, 9, 12, 19). Thus:

> Deuteronomy 3:20:
> Until YHWH, your God, grants safe haven (*ʿad ʾašer yānîaḥ*) to your brothers like you, when they, too, shall possess the land that YHWH, your God, is granting them on the other side of the Jordan. Then you may return, each to his possession (*yerūššātô*) which I have granted to you.
>
> Joshua 1:15:
> Until YHWH grants safe haven to your brothers like you, when they, too, shall possess the land that YHWH, your God, is granting them. Then you may return to the land of your possession (*ʾereṣ yerūššatkem*) and possess it, that very one which Moses, the servant of YHWH, granted to you on the other side of the Jordan, to the east.

Brief notices in Joshua 12:6, 18:7 likewise register the fact that the two and one-half tribes had received their proper territories in Transjordan, and their wording resonates Joshua 1:15, and ultimately Deuteronomy 3:20. The next station on the route of literary history is Joshua 13, a pivotal chapter, to be sure, but one that shows no interest in the question of Transjordanian legitimacy, per se. It merely assumes such legitimacy, and proceeds to outline the as yet unconquered regions of the land, and in that context to describe the specific geographical limits of the territories allotted to the two and one-half tribes in Transjordan. As such, Joshua 13 is directly relevant to the town lists of Numbers 32:3–4, 33–38. Such sources as Joshua 12 and 13 reflect the special status of the two and one-half Transjordanian tribes, but they do not speak of any dispensation, probably because the need to do so had already passed.

This brings us to Joshua 20–22. The evidence is of two sorts: (a) Notices to the effect that along with designating Towns of Asylum in Cisjordan, towns were likewise designated in Transjordan in accordance with the record in Deuteronomy 4:41–44, and amplifying the mandate of Deuteronomy 19:1–10. These notices are to be found in Joshua 20:8, 21:35*[placed between verses 40–41 in some editions]–37), and they likewise assume legitimacy; and (b) Joshua 22–24, major statements on the legitimacy of the Israelite communities of Transjordan, parts of which are highly polemical.

After completing the apportionment of Canaan to the nine and one-half tribes, Joshua summoned the Reubenites, Gadites and half of the tribe of Manasseh to Shiloh so as to consummate the apportionment of their lands in Transjordan. Joshua's speech is transparently intertextual in its imitation of the Deuteronomist, but a priestly hand is revealed by the locution *ʾereṣ ʾaḥuzzatkem* "the territory of your acquired estate" (Jos 22:4), and perhaps by usage of the verb *ʿ-z-b* "to abandon" (Jos 22:3). Joshua praised the two and one-half tribes for doing their part in the conquest of Cisjordan, and blessed them (Jos 22:1–6). He further reaffirmed the special status of the Manassites, granting them territory in the Bashan along with what they had already received west of the Jordan (Jos 22:7–8). The upshot of Joshua 22:1–8 is that the Deuteronomistic program has been fulfilled.

But, beginning in Joshua 22:9 and continuing to the end of the chapter, the language and tone change abruptly into a thoroughly priestly polemic directed against the two and one-half tribes. Joshua 22:9–34 are most definitely by a different hand. After returning to Gilead from Shiloh, the two and one-half tribes constructed a large, "showy" altar just across the Jordan, facing Canaan. Although the wording of Joshua 22:10–11 is admittedly confusing, there is little warrant for the view of Ahituv (1995:354–355) that the altar was built west of the Jordan. It is true that Joshua 22:10 says that these tribes built an altar in an area near the Jordan "which is in the land of Canaan" (*ʾăšer beʾereṣ Kenā ʿan*), presumably west of the Jordan. This would seem to be contradicted in the following verse, where it is reported that they had built the altar "facing the land of Canaan" (*ʾel mûl ʾereṣ Kenāʿan*), "across from the Israelites" (*ʾel ʿēber benê Yiśrāʾēl*).

Which wording identifies the venue? Now, Hebrew *ʾel ʿēber benê Yiśrāʾēl* is unique, to be sure, as is *ʾel mûl ʾereṣ Kenāʿan,* for that matter. But in the immediate context these constructions can hardly refer to anything other than to an area outside Canaan. It is rather the words *ʾăšer beʾereṣ Kenā ʿan* "which is in the land of Canaan" in Joshua 22:10 that create a problem, but these words could have been duplicated erroneously from the preceding verse, Joshua 22:9, where the same words occur: *miššilōh ʾăšer beʾereṣ Kenā ʿan* "from Shiloh which is in the land of Canaan." Once these words are eliminated, there is no contradiction: The altar stood east of the Jordan, a location implicit in all that follows.

This act was instantly regarded as being so blasphemous and offensive that it was cause for war. Before launching an attack, those tribes who were assembled at Shiloh sent the priest Phinehas, son of Eleazar, accompanied by ten *neśîʾîm*, to admonish the two and one-half tribes. The latter replied that their purpose in building the altar was not to offer sacrifice in Transjordan, but only to assure that in the future they would not be considered non-Israelites; that the Jordan would not be regarded as a boundary excluding them from affiliation with the people of YHWH. It was then agreed that the altar would be purely commemorative in function, and all were pleased.

The key to the *Sitz-im-Leben* of Joshua 22:9–34, to the extent that it is possible to establish it, lies in the terms of reference and predications of this episode as it is told. Ahituv (1995:353–358) outlines the priestly diction so blatant in this passage, which is highly intertextual in its composition. He notes, however, that the concept of "impure ground" (*ʾadāmāh ṭemēʾāh*), echoed in Joshua 22:19, comes from Amos 7:17, not from priestly literature. In Amos 7:17, reference is to the lands of the Assyrian exile and deportation, not to Transjordan Israelite settlements; only here has it been applied to the Transjordanian Israelite territory. For the rest, the passage is consistently priestly, as evidenced by the usage of the terms *ʾaḥuzzāh* "acquired estate," and the denominative *hēʾāḥēz* "to acquire an *ʾaḥuzẓāh*" in Joshua 22:19, both of which recall Genesis 34:10.

> Joshua 22:19a:
> If it is because the land of your acquired estate is impure (*weʾak ʾim ṭemēʾāh ʾereṣ ʾaḥuzzatkem*), cross over to the land of YHWH's *ʾaḥuzzāh*, where the Tabernacle of YHWH abides, and acquire estates in our midst (*wehēʾāḥazû betôkēnû*; cf. Jos 22:9).
>
> Genesis 34:10:
> And dwell amongst us, and the land (*wehāʾāreṣ*) shall be open before you; settle down, engage in trade, and acquire estates (*weḥēʾāḥazû*) in it."

Particularly informative is a comparison between the charge to the Transjordanian tribes in Joshua 22:16–20 and other priestly sources, most notably Numbers 32:5–15. The point of closest contact is in the phrase *kî tešûbūn mēʾaḥarāw* "were you to go back on your commitment to him" in Numbers 32:15. The same theme is repeated, in virtually the same words, in Joshua 22:16, 17, 23. In Numbers 32, the hindsight is that of one speaking at the end of the Wilderness Period about the discouraging report of the spies, dated by the priestly writer to the beginning of the Wilderness Period. In Joshua 22, the hindsight is that of one speaking near the end of Joshua's career as leader in the new land about events at the end of the Wilderness Period, at the time when the Baal Peor incident occurred in Transjordan. (Phinehas had a role in that episode, as well.) What is new in Joshua 22 is, therefore, the cultic agenda. The Transjordanian tribes are being told that their action in building an altar east of the Jordan was tantamount to idolatry.

It emerges that Joshua 22:9–34 is a late priestly extension of the Deuteronomic doctrine of cult centralization to the Transjordanian Israelite territories. The distinctive construction, *mizbah YHWH 'ĕlōhênû* "the altar of YHWH, our God," in Joshua 22:19, 29, is taken from *mizbaḥ YHWH 'ĕlōhêkā* "the altar of YHWH, your God," a major and frequent term of reference occurring in Deuteronomy 12:27, 16:21, 26:4, 27:6, the very texts that enunciate the Deuteronomic doctrine. This doctrine was endorsed by the priestly school in Leviticus 17, which uses the term *mizbaḥ YHWH* "the altar of YHWH" (Lev 17:6) in mandating the same restriction. Reference to *miškan YHWH* "the Tabernacle of YHWH" in Joshua 22:19 recalls Leviticus 17:4, where the same term serves to designate the site of the one legitimate altar.

But, whereas Deuteronomy intended for the prohibition of multiple altars to apply only to the land west of the Jordan, Joshua 22 extends its applicability to Transjordan, which it considers foreign territory. The fact, noted above, that Joshua 22:19 took the characterization *'ădāmāh ṭemē'āh* "impure ground" from Amos 7:17, where it referred to the lands of the Assyrian exile, and applied it to Transjordan is significant. Its author imposes on the Transjordanian communities the status of exilic communities and in so doing, also extends the Deuteronomic doctrine beyond the borders of the Land of Israel.

It is likely, therefore, that Joshua 22 postdates both core Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomist, and that it is consequently a postexilic composition responding to religious problems of the Persian Period, when there were large estates in Transjordan owned by Jews, and influential Jewish communities living under their own leadership. It became necessary to adopt a position on sacrificial worship of the God of Israel in Transjordan, where, since earlier times, altars and cult installations had operated. Some of these installations remained standing in the postexilic period, and their continued presence was explained on the grounds that from the outset they had been merely commemorative. Joshua 22 is making a complex statement: The Jews of Transjordan are legitimate; the Jordan river is a boundary, to be sure (Jos 22:25), but not one that excludes them from the people of Israel. These Jews worship the God of Israel but not through sacrifice, which is restricted to the one legitimate altar within the Land of Israel. In the retrojective mise-en-scène of Joshua 22, this would have been the altar at Shiloh, operative at the time of Joshua and thereafter, until the Ark was installed in Jerusalem (Jos 18:1). All of this is linked to the question of the legitimacy of the Transjordanian Israelite communities, introduced in Deuteronomy, or by the Deuteronomist, and amplified by the authors of Numbers 32.

PART X.

NUMBERS 33: THE ROUTE TO THE PROMISED LAND

◆

INTRODUCTION

Numbers 33 charts the marches of the Israelites pursuant to their departure from Egypt, from a gathering point in northeastern Egypt all the way to the Plains of Moab, across the Jordan from Jericho. This "long march" took exactly forty years. It is projected in line with the priestly recasting of the Exodus and the events of the Wilderness Period, and is to be assigned to the priestly source, although it exhibits significant peculiarities of its own. It generally follows the traditions of Exodus, pursuing a southern Sinai route. As will be pointed out repeatedly in the Notes to Numbers 33, many of the toponyms listed on the route of march have not been identified. It remains unclear what historical value there is to the Sinai route charted in Numbers 33. This subject has been investigated extensively (see Redford 1987; Kitchen 1992, in *ABD* II:700–708), but without conclusive results. The route taken by the Israelites once they left Sinai proper, from Kadesh on, may have more historical foundation, but, at the same time, it presents more complications.

The route of the march recorded in Numbers 33 begins in the Land of Goshen in northeastern Egypt. After some backtracking, the Israelites made their way to southern Sinai, to Rephidim and Hazeroth. When the time came to move, they turned northward and proceeded via Jotbath to Ezion-Geber at the Gulf of Elath, and only then repaired inland to Kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin (Num 33:1–39). From Kadesh and Mount Hor, an unidentified site in the environs of Kadesh where Aaron died, the Israelites marched eastward into Transjordan via Punon, in Edom (Map 3). This is in clear disagreement with the JE historiography of the Book of Numbers, which had the Israelites encamp at Kadesh soon after the Exodus, and from Kadesh march to the Gulf of Elath, then to circumvent Edom and Moab (Num 14:25, 20:14–21, 21:4). The difference between the JE and the priestly historiographers, except for the authors and compilers of Numbers 33, is that the priestly authors had the Israelites migrate in Sinai for thirty-eight years before arriving at Kadesh. From that point on, however, the priestly route also had the Israelites circumvent Edom and Moab. In contrast, Numbers 33 has the Israelites marching to the Gulf of Elath before repairing to Kadesh, and it then charts their continuing route northward through Edom and Moab, via Dibon-Gad, north of the Arnon, to the Plains of Moab (Num 33:40–49). Numbers 33:40 also shows the cognizance of Numbers 21:1–3, which had reported an Israelite incursion into the Negeb at Arad.

The route charted by the Deuteronomist in Deuteronomy 1–3 agrees with the JE traditions of Numbers, in that it places the Israelites in Kadesh soon after the Exodus (Deut 2:14). Deuteronomy 2:1 clearly resonates with Numbers 14:25, in stating *wannāsob ʾet har Śēʿîr yāmîm rabbîm* "We encircled Mount Seir many days," using the same verb, *s-b-b*, to indicate a roundabout route. But Deuteronomy 2:2–8 seem to indicate not only a different policy toward Seir/Edom, but a different route as well. Thus, Deuteronomy 2:4: "You are passing through the territory (*ʿōberîm bigebûl*) of our brothers, the sons of Esau, who inhabit Seir." Similarly, Deuteronomy 2:18 seems to modify Deuteronomy 2:9 by making it clear that the route was to pass through Moabite territory, not to the east of Moab. Note, however, that with respect to the land of the Ammonites, the wording is significantly different. Thus, Deuteronomy 2:19: "You will be drawing near, facing the Ammonites (*weqārabtā mûl benê ʿAmmôn*)." In effect, the Deuteronomist vacillates between two traditions pertaining to the route beyond Ezion-Geber/Elath, one that is his own, and the other that represents the JE historiographers. The authors and compilers of Numbers 33 opted clearly for the route northward from Punon in Edom to Dibon-Gad in the Moabite Mishor, which has its roots in the writings of the Deuteronomist.

Numbers 33 concludes with YHWH's stern instructions to Moses to destroy all pagan cult installations in Canaan, to deport the previous inhabitants of Canaan, and to allocate the land proportionally by lot to the Israelite tribes as their *naḥalāh*. Failure to expel the inhabitants of the land would only lead to future conflict with them. (Num 33:50–56).

TRANSLATION

33 [1]These are the routes of march of the Israelites who departed from the land of Egypt, according to their divisions, by order of Moses and Aaron.

[2]Moses wrote down their points of departure for their routes of march by order of YHWH. These, then, are their routes of march, according to their points of departure:

[3]They set forth from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the morrow of the paschal sacrifice the Israelites departed from Egypt defiantly, in sight of all the Egyptians.

[4]The Egyptians were burying those among them whom YHWH had slain, every firstborn; YHWH also condemned their gods to punishment.

[5]The Israelites marched from Rameses and encamped at Succoth.

[6]They marched from Succoth and encamped at Etham, which is on the edge of the wilderness.

[7]They marched from Etham, but turned back toward Pi-Hahiroth, which faces Baal-Zephon, and they encamped before Migdol.

[8]They marched from Pi-Hahiroth and crossed over through the sea into the wilderness. They then proceeded on a journey of three days in the Wilderness of Etham, encamping at Marah.

[9]They marched from Marah and arrived at Elim, and in Elim there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they encamped there.

[10]They marched from Elim and encamped by the Sea of Reeds.

[11]They marched from the Sea of Reeds and encamped in the Wilderness of Sin.

[12]They marched from the Wilderness of Sin and encamped at Dophkah.

[13]They marched from Dophkah and encamped at Alush.

[14]They marched from Alush and encamped at Rephidim; but there was no water there for the people to drink.

[15]They marched from Rephidim and encamped in the Wilderness of Sinai.

[16]They marched from the Wilderness of Sinai and encamped at Kibroth-Hataava.

[17]They marched from Kibroth-Hataava and encamped at Hazeroth.

[18]They marched from Hazeroth and encamped at Rithmah.

[19]They marched from Rithmah and encamped at Rimmon-Perez.

[20]They marched from Rimmon-Perez and encamped at Libnah.

[21]They marched from Libnah and encamped at Rissah.

[22]They marched from Rissah and encamped at Kehelath.

[23]They marched from Kehelath and encamped at Mount Shepher.

[24]They marched from Mount Shepher and encamped at Haradah.

[25]They marched from Haradah and encamped at Makheloth.

[26]They marched from Makheloth and encamped at Tahath.

[27]They marched from Tahath and encamped at Terah.

[28]They marched from Terah and encamped at Mithkah.

[29]They marched from Mithkah and encamped at Hashmonah.

[30]They marched from Hashmonah and encamped at Moseroth.

[31]They marched from Moseroth and encamped at Bene-Jaakan.

[32]They marched from Bene-Jaakan and encamped at Hor-Hagidgad.

[33]They marched from Hor-Hagidgad and encamped at Jotbath.

[34]They marched from Jotbath and encamped at Abronah.

[35]They marched from Abronah and encamped at Ezion-Geber.

[36]They marched from Ezion-Geber and encamped in the Wilderness of Zin, that is Kadesh.

[37]They marched from Kadesh and encamped at Mount Hor, on the edge of the land of Edom.

[38]Aaron, the priest, ascended Mount Hor by order of YHWH and there he died in the fortieth year after the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, in the fifth month, on the first of the month.

[39]Aaron was one hundred twenty-three years old at his death on Mount Hor.

[40]The Canaanite, the king of Arad, who ruled in the Negeb, in the land of Canaan, heard of the arrival of the Israelites.

[41]They marched from Mount Hor and encamped at Zalmonah.

[42]They marched from Zalmonah and encamped at Punon.

[43]They marched from Punon and encamped at Oboth.

[44]They marched from Oboth and encamped at Iyye-Abarim, on the border of Moab.

[45]They marched from Iyyim and encamped at Dibon-Gad.

[46]They marched from Dibon-Gad and encamped at Almon-Diblathaim.

[47]They marched from Almon-Diblathaim and encamped in the hills of Abarim, before Nebo.

[48]They marched from the hills of Abarim and encamped in the Plains of Moab, across the Jordan from Jericho.

[49]They encamped by the Jordan, from Beth-Jeshimoth as far as Abel-Shittim in the Plains of Moab.

[50]Then YHWH spoke to Moses in the Plains of Moab across the Jordan from Jericho, as follows:

[51]Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: You are now crossing the Jordan into the Land of Canaan.

[52]You must drive out all of the inhabitants of the land from your presence; you shall ruin all of their figurative objects, and all of their molten images shall you ruin, and all of their cult platforms you must destroy.

[53]You shall depopulate the land and settle in it, for to you have I granted the land to seize as a possession.

[54]You shall allocate the land to yourselves as an estate by lot, by your clans; to the more numerous shall you grant a larger estate and to the less numerous shall you grant a smaller estate. Wherever the lot shall come out for anyone, it shall be his. You shall allocate the land to yourselves by your ancestral tribes.

[55]But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from your presence, it will happen that those of them whom you allow to remain will be as prickles in your eyes and as thorns in your sides, and they will attack you on the [very] land in which you dwell.

[56]Thus it will be, that as I had intended to do to them I will do to you!

NOTES TO NUMBERS 33:1–49: THE LONG MARCH

1. *These are the routes of march.* The term *massāʿ* "march" (by assimilation from *ma[n]sāʿ*) was encountered in Numbers 10:2, 6, and again in Numbers 10:28, where we have virtually the identical formula: *ʾēleh masse ʿê benê Yiśrāʾēl* . . . *leṣibʾōtām*, here translated "These are the routes of march of the Israelites . . . by their divisions" (see Notes to Num 10:2, 28; Levine 1993:205, 308, and

cf. Gen 13:3, Exod 17:1, 40:36–38). Here the text is tracking a continuous route from Egypt to the Plains of Moab. Numbers 10 told of arraying the divisions in preparation for this long march. In the priestly configuration, Moses and Aaron often shared command, so that the people undertook the march *beyad Mōšeh we-ʾAharôn* "by order of Moses and Aaron."

2. *Moses wrote down their points of departure.* It is significant that writing is mentioned here as a method of recording information. The subject of literacy is currently under discussion. It must be emphasized that although monumental inscriptions and lengthy texts have not been uncovered to any extent in Iron Age Canaan, many seals, bullae and ostraca have come to light from various regions of the land. Within Torah literature, references to the writing of public documents is most notable in Deuteronomy and in the writings of the Deuteronomist (Deut 4:13, 5:22, 9:10, 10:2–4, 17:18, 27:3, 8, 31:24–26, cf. 2 Kings 17:37). Certain Exodus traditions on the tablets of the law, which, like core Deuteronomy, may have originated in northern Israel, also mention writing (Exod 24:12, 32:15, 52). It is somewhat unexpected to find in P a reference to writing in general, and even more so, to the writing of what would qualify as a public document, an itinerary recorded by Moses. The only reference to a private document in P is in the ordeal of the suspected wife (Num 5:23), and the present verse contains the only reference to a public document to be found in P, unless we include Genesis 5:1 *zeh sēper tôledōt ʾādām* "This is the record of the line of Adam." To the contrary, the priestly writers recast the early culture of Israel as one of the spoken word, rather than as a culture utilizing written records to any extent.

Moses wrote down the points of origin for the routes of march, beginning in each case with the point of departure to be followed by the point of arrival, where the Israelites then encamped. The march would resume at the command of YHWH (*ʿal pî YHWH*), as we are repeatedly reminded in Numbers 9:18, 20, 23. The meaning of the Hebrew *môṣāʾ* "point of origin" is best illustrated by 1 Kings 10:28: "The point of origin of Solomon's horses (*ûmôṣāʾ hassûsîm ʾašer lišlōmōh*) was from Musur and from Kue; the royal merchants would purchase them from Kue at a fixed price." In biblical Hebrew, a "source of water" is *môṣāʾ mayim* (2 Kings 2:21, Isa 58:11, Ps 107:33).

3–4. The Israelites departed from Rameses (*Raʿamsēs*), as previously recorded in Exodus 12:37, a site identified as Piramesse (= *pr-rmssw* "the house of Ramesses"), the royal residence of the Pharaohs of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties. This is present-day Khatana-Qantir, in the northeastern Delta, on the eastern bank of the Pelusiac arm of the Nile. The city was greatly developed by Rameses II, although its origins hark back to the Middle Kingdom. Its major investigator is the archaeologist of the eastern Nile Delta, M. Bietak (1981; also see Wente 1992, in *ABD* V:617–618). The Israelites set out on the fifteenth day of the first month, on the morrow of the Paschal sacrifice (*mimmoḥorat happesaḥ*), celebrated on the fourteenth day of the first month toward evening (Exod 12:6).

YHWH also condemned their gods to punishment.

Numbers 33:4 resonates with Exodus 12:12: "And I shall pass through the land of Egypt and I shall slay (*wehikkêtî*) every firstborn in the Land of Egypt, from man to beast, and I shall also condemn the gods of Egypt to punishment" (cf. Exod 12:29). The force of the Hiphil form of the Hebrew verb *n-k-h, hikkāh,* when used in the context of death is "to strike a fatal blow; to slay" (see Notes to Num 35:11). The formula *ʿāśāh šepāṭîm b-* means: "to secure a conviction against-, to condemn to judicial punishment." It is a favorite of Ezekiel (5:10, 15, 11:9, and so forth), who often speaks of God as punishing the sinners of Israel, as well as those of other nations. The formula *ʿāśāh šepāṭîm* echoes the expression *ʿāśāh mišpāṭ* "to do justice; to issue a just verdict" (Gen 18:25, 2 Sam 8:15, Jer 5:1, Micah 6:5). Both the act and its consequences are expressed by the same word, it being understood that the punishment is justly deserved.

5–7. *The Israelites marched from Rameses and encamped at Succoth.* From Rameses the Israelites marched to Succoth (Hebrew *Sukkōt*), also previously recorded in Exodus 12:37, and they encamped there. The biblical Succoth has not been positively identified, although its presumed location offers a number of candidates, including Tell el-Maskhuta, located fifteen kilometers west of modern Ismailia in Wadi Tumilat. Some have even proposed that the Hebrew *Sukkōt* is derived from the Egyptian name *Tjkw*, a way of designating Wadi Tumilat in New Kingdom sources. Many statues bearing that name have been unearthed at Tell el-Maskhuta (Seely 1992, in *ABD* VI:217–218; Redford 1987:140). From Succoth the Israelites marched to Etham (*ʾĒtām*), located *biqeṣēh hammidbār* "at the edge of the wilderness," and encamped there (cf. Exod 13:20). The following verse, Numbers 33:8, speaks of wandering for three days *bemidbar ʾĒtām* "in the wilderness of Etham." The Hebrew name may simply represent a variant abbreviated form of Pithom, Hebrew *Pitom* (= *pr-Itm* "house of Atum") of Exodus 1:11, said to have been constructed by Israelites. In the same way, the Hebrew *Raʿamsēs* is an abbreviation of *Pr-Rmssw* "House of Ramesses," later written simply as *Rmssw* (Görg 1992, in *ABD* II:644). Alternatively, it may represent Egyptian *Hwt-Itm,* a site attested in the Edfu nome list of the eighth nome of Lower Egypt in Wadi Tumilat (Redford 1987:142).

From Etham/Pithom the Israelites "turned back" (*wayyāšob*) to Pi-Hahiroth (*Pi-haḥîrōt*), which is facing (*ʿal penê*) Baal-Zephon (*Ba ʿal Ṣepôn*), encamping before Migdol. None of these three toponyms has been positively identified. The name *Migdōl,* which means "watchtower, fortress" is West Semitic rather than Egyptian (Exod 14:2). In context, it would have been located in the eastern Delta region. Ezekiel 29:10, 30:6, speak of Migdol as the northernmost town in Egypt in contrast to Syene as the southernmost. The name Migdol occurs once in the El-Amarna letters, written *URU Ma-ag-da-lí*^{KI} (EA 234:29), but no precise location is indicated for it (Lott 1992, in *ABD* IV:822, and cf. Jer 44:1, 46:14). As for Pi-Hahiroth (Exod 14:2, 9), a likewise unidentified site in the eastern Delta region, it appears to represent a Hebraized rendering of an original Akkadian designation: *pī ḫirītu* "the mouth of the canal" (cf. Akkadian *ḫirītu* "excavation, canal" in *CAD Ḫ*:198 s.v. *ḫirītu*; Redford 1992, in *ABD* V:371). It may be relevant to mention that Hebrew *haḥîrōt* is the handle identifying a specific parcel of land that presumably included an irrigation canal in Hebrew letters from Nahal Hever on the Dead Sea, dating from the Bar Kochba period, in the early second century C.E.

Finally, Baal-Zephon (*Baʿal Ṣepôn*; Exod 14:2, 9), also unidentified, was named after a well-known Syro-Canaanite deity, whose cult was imported into Egypt. At least three Baal-Zephon sanctuaries have been found in northern Egypt, in Memphis, Tahpanhes (Tell Defineh) and Mount Cassius at Ras Qasrun. According to Bietak (1981:253), a temple at Tell el-Dabʾa just south of Qantir was dedicated to Baal. He takes note of a place called *Migdōl*, characterized as "of Baal-Zephon," and located near Wadi Tumilat, which is mentioned in Cairo papyrus 31169. This all indicates a location in the eastern Delta area (Raabe 1992, in *ABD* I:554–555). The upshot is that the Israelites are said to have backtracked from the edge of the wilderness to a point in northeastern Egypt near the sea.

8. *and crossed over through the sea into the wilderness*. In words similar to Exodus 14:22, the text here states that the Israelites "crossed over through the sea" (*wayya ʿabrû betôk hayyām*) after departing from Pi-Hahiroth, and then proceeded into the wilderness. It remains uncertain which "sea" is being referred to, and suggestions include: (a) a lake flowing into Wadi Tumilat, (b) the Shihor, a lake alongside an eastern branch of the Nile, and (c) pools near the modern Timsah Lake. It would seem that, as emphasized in Exodus 13:17–18, the text is telling us that access to Canaan via "the ways of Horus," as this route is now called, or *derek ʾereṣ Pelištîm* "the way of Philistines" as it is referred to in the Bible, was deemed impossible, so the Israelites were trapped, unable to proceed along the northern Sinai coast or to return to Egypt. They were consequently compelled to turn southward, and to traverse the marshy lakes of the eastern Delta down to Succoth. Apparently they had gotten through to Migdol initially without having to cross bodies of water, but in seeking to return to Succoth they had to do so. In any event, they were now committed to a southern Sinai route through the wilderness.

En route, they marched for three days without water in the wilderness of Etham, encamping at Marah (*Mārāh*; Exod 15:23). The name means "bitter," suggesting a place were the water was brackish. The most likely site of Marah is ʿAin Hawarah, forty-seven miles south of Suez, and about seven miles from the Sea of Reeds. The springs at this site lay along the route to the Sinai mines, where very bitter waters are to be found, due to their soda content. Understandably, other narratives of the Sinai experience also speak of the lack of water and of its unsuitability, as we would expect (Thompson 1992a, in *ABD* IV:513).

9. From Marah the Israelites proceeded to Elim (*’Ēlîm*), where they encamped (cf. Exod 15:27–16:1). Some have suggested that reference is to Wadi Gharandel, about ninety kilometers south of Suez, an area abundant in water and vegetation, not far south of Ain Hawarah that, as noted just above, may be biblical Marah. This site has been described by modern explorers such as Robinson and Petrie. Twelve artesian springs (Hebrew *‘ênōt mayim*) would have provided a lot of drinking water (Zorn 1992, in *ABD* II:469).

10–12. *and encamped by the Sea of Reeds.* The next major station on the route southward was Dophka (*Dopkāh*), which has been tentatively identified as Serabit el-Khadem in southwestern Sinai, near the Sea of Reeds. The designation *yam sûp* "Sea of Reeds" is ambiguous (see Notes to Num 14:25; Levine 1993:368–369). To the authors of the accounts in Exodus 14–17, and to the author/compiler of Numbers 33, it applied both to the sea of the Gulf of Aqaba, and to the sea lying between east Africa and the Sinai peninsula, in the Gulf of Suez, and this is its intended location here. As for the Wilderness of Sin (*midbar Sîn*), its extent can only be delimited by context: It refers to the western region of the Sinai Peninsula extending from the northern tip of the Sea of Reeds down to Dophka. The possible relationship between Hebrew Sin and Sinai has not been clarified.

13–14. The Israelites encamped at a unidentified site named Alush (*’Ālûš*), and then proceeded to Rephidim (*Repîdîm*) in southern Sinai (Exod 17:8, 19:2), but found no water. The site of biblical Rephidim remains unidentified, with some suggesting Wadi Firān, near the southern tip of Sinai, in the vicinity of Jebel Musa, an identification going back to Byzantine times, while others suggest Refayid (J. Seely 1992, in *ABD* V:677–678). Exodus 17 preserves the record of various events that transpired at Rephidim. Once again, there was lack of drinking water.

15–17. *in the Wilderness of Sinai.* The Israelites remained in southern Sinai, which, in the tradition of the author of Numbers 33, is designated "the Wilderness of Sinai" (*midbar Sînay*; see Notes to Num 1:1; Levine 1993:129). This region contrasts with "the Wilderness of Paran" (*midbar Pā’rān*), essentially the northern part of the peninsula, the wilderness facing El Paran, namely, Elath (see Notes to Num 10:12; Levine 1993:307, and cf. Num 12:16). The Arabic name Wadi Firān, designating a major oasis in southern Sinai, may derive from another site with the ancient name of *Pā’rān*, or it may not. It seems a bit imprecise to list the Wilderness of Sinai as the site of an encampment in the same manner as specific oases and the other places are listed here.

The Israelites moved on to Kibroth Hataava (*Qibrōt hatta 'awāh*), so named because at this place the people "craved" meat and then met their death (Num 11:34–35, Deut 9:22). From there, they proceeded to Hazeroth (*Ḥaṣērōt*), a name that means "courtyards, villages." This site has usually been identified with *Ain Khadra* (Ḥudra), located some thirty-five kilometers northeast of Jebel Musa. In Deuteronomy 1:1, Hazeroth is listed after Laban (= Libnah of Num 33:20) and before Di-Zahab, tentatively identified as Mina' ed-Dahab, on the southern Sinaitic coast of the Red Sea. This would put Hazeroth in southeastern Sinai (Thompson 1992b, in *ABD* III:86–87).

18–35. After migrating for a time in southern Sinai, the Israelites turned northward. There follows a rapid list of sites, presumably lying along a northerly route through eastern Sinai to Ezion-Geber/Elath, none of which is clearly identifiable. From Hazeroth they proceeded to Rithmah (*Ritmāh*), a name that Gray (Gray-*ICC*:445–446) derives from the plant, *rōtem* "broom plant," and that is mentioned only here. From that place they continued on to Rimmon-Perez (*Rimmōn Pereṣ*), an otherwise unknown site. Hebrew *rimmōn* means "pomegranate" and serves as a component of several identifiable personal and place-names in biblical literature, including *sela' hārrimmōn* "the Rock of Rimmon" (Judg 20:45–47), *'ên rimmōn* "Pomegranate Spring" (Jos 19:7, Neh 11:29), and the personal name *Rimmōn* in 2 Samuel 4:2, 5, 9 (Arnold 1992, in *ABD* V:773–774). The place-name *Rimmōn-Pereṣ* would mean "Pomegranate Gorge," or the like. Libnah "the white place" is probably a variant of Laban, a site listed as being near Hazeroth and Di-Zahab in Deuteronomy 1:1. It is unrelated to the better-known, although inconclusively located, town of Libnah (Jos 21:13).

The next fifteen listed sites can be discussed with utterly brevity. It has been suggested that Rissah (*Rissāh*) be identified with Rasah, a site south of Aqabah, or with Kunṭillet el-Gerafi between Qseime and Aqabah, but there is no basis for verifying these suggested identifications of a site mentioned only here. Kehelath (*Qehēlat*), which means "gathering place," may be a duplicate of Makheloth (*Maqhēlōt*) in Numbers 33:25–26. Mount Shepher (*Har-Šeper*) means "beautiful mountain." Haradah (*Ḥarādāh*) means "trembling" and may represent the same type of symbolic name as Kibroth Hataava, in Numbers 33:16–17, above, namely one that recalls an incident (Zorn 1992, in *ABD* III:57). Makheloth (*Maqhēlōt*), as has been suggested, is a duplicate of Kehelath, just above. Hebrew Tahath (*Taḥat*) means "the foot of a mountain." Cf. *betaḥtît hāhār* "at the foot of the mountain" in Exodus 19:17. Terah (*Teraḥ*) is otherwise known only as a personal name, that of Abram's father (Gen 11:24–32, Jos 24:2). The name Mithkah (*Mitqāh*) means "sweet, sweetness" and may associate the site with sweet water, just as Jotbath (*Yoṭbāt*) in Numbers 33:33–34, below, connotes "beauty, sweetness." The name Hashmonah (*Ḥasmōnāh*) yields no clear meaning, the closest to it in form being Heshmon

(*Ḥešmôn*) in Joshua 15:27, a town in the Negeb of Judah. The name Moseroth (*Mōsērôt*) means "reins, straps," and is variously written *Môsērāh* in Deuteronomy 10:6–7, a brief list of wilderness sites from which the present list in Numbers 33:31–33 may have been adapted, for all we know. That list also includes Bene-Jaakan (*Benê Yaʿaqān*) and Gudgod (here: *Ḥōr Haggidgād*) and Jotbath, in that order. As was true of several other place-names in Numbers 33, a noteworthy incident is associated with Moserah in Deuteronomy 10:6–7, namely, the death of Aaron and the succession of Eleazar as chief priest. In Deuteronomy 10:6–7, *Benê Yaʿaqān* occurs as *Beʾērōt Benê Yaʿaqān* "the wells of the sons of Jaakan." The same name designates one of the clans in the genealogy of Seir in 1 Chronicles 1:42, which would associate it with northeastern Sinai (Matthews 1992, in *ABD* I:668–669). As for Hor-Hagidgad (*Ḥōr Haggidgād*), written *Gūdgōd* in Deuteronomy 10:6–7, it has been tentatively identified with Wadi Ghadhaghedh (Zorn 1992b, in *ABD* III:287). The Septuagint and the Vulgate understand the name to begin with *har* "mountain." Jotbath is also unidentified, and like Mithkah, above, expresses the presence of sweet water. Abronah (*ʿAbronah*) precedes Ezion-Geber and might refer to a site in that area.

and encamped at Ezion-Geber.

This brings us to Ezion-Geber (*ʿEṣion-Geber*) itself (Deut 2:8). 1 Kings 9:26 relates that Solomon conducted sea trade with Ophir from a port by this name, which is located "near Eloth on the shore of the Red Sea (*yam sûp*) in the land of Edom" (cf. 1 Kings 22:48, 2 Chron 8:17, 20:36). Nelson Glueck identified it as Tell el-Kheleifeh after conducting excavations there between 1938 and 1940. The mound lies on the northern coast of the Gulf of Elath, between Jordanian Aqabah and Israeli Elath of today. There has been persistent scholarly debate about the presence of a metallurgical industry at Ezion-Geber, as claimed by Glueck, and about the precise location of the site, which may be referred to in a temple list from Karnak as *s-b-r-t n g-b-ry* (= *sblt n-gbry*), "the maelstrom of GBR" (Lubetsky 1992, in *ABD* II:723–726). Its inclusion in the lists of Numbers 33 is pursuant to the statement in Numbers 14:25, 21:4, instructing Moses and the Israelites to proceed from Kadesh to the way of the Red Sea, namely, to the Gulf of Aqabah/Elath. Here, the sequence is reversed and the pursuant route altered significantly. The Israelites arrive first at Ezion-Geber/Elath, proceed inland to Kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin, and then pursue a northerly route through Edom and Moab instead of circumventing these lands.

36–39. *in the Wilderness of Zin, that is Kadesh.* The route continues inland, via Mount Hor to Kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin (see Notes to Num 14:25; Levine 1993:368–369). On the location of the Wilderness of Zin (*midbar Ṣin*), and problems connected with its location, see Notes to Numbers 20:1; Levine 1993:487, and for Kadesh (*Qādēš*), see the Comments to Numbers 13–14; Levine 1993:372–375, and Manor 1992, in *ABD* IV:1–3. The present record merely restates Numbers 20:22–23, and following. Here the text reads ***biqṣēh ʾereṣ ʾEdôm*** "at the edge of the land of Edom," whereas in Numbers 20:23, the wording is ***ʿal gebûl ʾereṣ ʾEdôm*** "on the border of the land of Edom." A precise date is given for Aaron's death, in the fortieth year after the Exodus from Egypt, and his age at his death is also given.

40. *The Canaanite, the king of Arad, who ruled in the Negeb.* The present verse refers, albeit abruptly, to the brief account in Numbers 21:1–3 about the attempted Israelite incursion into the Negeb at Arad. In Notes to Numbers 21:1–3, the special sense of the Hebrew *yōšēb* "inhabits, resides" as indicating the "seat" of a king is explained. On the episode itself, see the Comments to Numbers 21.

41–42. The Israelites proceed eastward through an unidentified site named Zalmonah (*Salmonah*), which may reflect the notion of "blackness, darkness" (cf. Mount Zalmon in Judg 9:48, Ps 68:14, and note several personal names similarly constructed). Then they arrived at Punon (*Pûnōn*), which has been identified with the Greek Phaino, Arabic Faynan, a district and/or town that has a long history as a center of copper mining and smelting, going as far back as the early Bronze Age. The name probably occurs as *pwnw*, a district inhabited by Shasu nomads in the late thirteenth century B.C.E. according to a record from the reign of Rameses II. Perhaps most relevant to the present account is the provenance of Punon that was an Edomite town during the seventh to fifth centuries B.C.E. (Knauf 1992, in *ABD* V:556–557). The fairly certain identification of Punon definitely places the Israelites in central Edom.

43–44. Although some of the listed toponyms on the route northward from Punon remain unidentified, the destination of Dibon-Gad makes it clear that an interior northerly route through Moab is being projected in Numbers 33. The implications of this disagreement with Numbers 14:25, 21:1 on the Transjordanian route will be discussed in the Introduction and Notes to Numbers 33.

Oboth (*ʾŌbōt*) is of uncertain identification, as is true of Iyye-Abarim (*ʿIyyê-ʿAbārîm*) "the ruins of Abarim, or perhaps "the ruins of the passes." Both place-names are mentioned in Numbers 21:10–12, with the latter being located "facing Moab from the east" and south of Wadi Zered (Mattingly 1992, in *ABD* III:588). *Dibon-Gad* is an alternative name of Dibon, Mesha's capital just north of the Arnon, reflecting the tradition of Numbers 32:34 according to which the Gadites built (or rebuilt) this town. It thus qualifies as a literary anachronism, giving away the fact that the author knew the later affiliation of the town while writing about an antecedent period. On the archaeological history of Dibon, see Notes to Numbers 21:30, and the Comments to Numbers 21, and Tushingham 1992, in *ABD* II:194–196.

45–48. From Dibon-Gad the Israelites marched to Almon-Diblathaim (Hebrew *ʿAlmōn-Diblātayim*), which is taken by some as a variant of Beth-

Diblathaim (Hebrew *Bêt-Diblātāyim*), a site mentioned in the oracle against Moab in Jeremiah 48:22 alongside Nebo and Dibon. The name *Dbltn* also occurs in the Moabite Stela, line 30, where Mesha reports that he fortified this town, which has been tentatively identified with Deleilat esh-Sherqiyeh, about halfway between Dibon and Medeba (Younker 1992, in *ABD* I:181). The component *ʿAlmōn*, which represents the name of a town located in the territory of Benjamin (Jos 21:18), would seem to mean "hidden," perhaps conveying some aspect of its topography or location.

From Almon-Diblathaim the Israelites marched to the mountains of Abarim (*hārê hāʿabārîm*, variously: *har hāʿabārîm*) "facing Nebo" (*lipnê Nebô*; see Notes to Num 27:12, 32:3, and above, in Notes to Num 33:44). This is the mountain range of which Mount Nebo is one of the peaks. From there, they proceeded to the Plains of Moab (*ʿarbōt Môʾāb*), a designation first encountered in Numbers 22:1, where it is explained. There it is described as being *meʿēber leyardēn Yerēḥô* "across the Jordan from Jericho" (cf. Num 34:15, Jos 13:32).

49. *They encamped by the Jordan.* The Israelite encampment near the Jordan on the eastern side reached from Beth-Jeshimoth (precisely: *Bêt-Hayyěšîmōt*) to Abel-Shittim (*ʾĀbēl Haššiṭṭîm*). The name of the former, Beth-Jeshimoth, may be realized in the Arabic toponym Khirbet es-Suweimeh, whereas Glueck (1943:23–26) has suggested an identification with Tell Azeimeh (Romero 1992, in *ABD* I:689). The component *Yesimot* would appear to be cognate with the Hebrew *yešîmōn* "wasteland, wilderness" (Num 21:20). *ʾĀbēl-Šiṭṭîm*, abbreviated *Haššiṭṭîm*, which means "the acacia trees," is the site where the Baal-Peor incident occurred, according to Numbers 25:1, a passage taken from JE (see Notes to Num 25:1). The earlier historiographic sources had already placed the Israelites in the Plains of Moab in Numbers 22:1, resuming that location in Numbers 25:1 by reference to Shittim. The priestly itinerary of Numbers 33 merely repeats the report of the Israelite arrival at the Jordan.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 33:50–56: A POLEMICAL ADMONITION

50–51. *You are now crossing the Jordan into the Land of Canaan.* Numbers 33:50–56 present a strong statement, resonating with Deuteronomic and Deuteronomistic themes, on the conquest and settlement of Canaan. The force of the particle *kî* here, and in Numbers 34:1, 35:10, is temporal. Used with the participles, *baʾim* "entering" and *ʿōberîm* "crossing," it is best translated "now." We are more accustomed to *kî* + the imperfect, as in *kî tabō̆ʾû ʾel hā̆ʾāreṣ* "When you enter the land" (Exod 12:25, Lev 14:25).

52. *You must drive out all of the inhabitants of the land.* The Hiphil verb *hôrîš* "to drive out, depopulate, dispossess" is a significant motif in statements of policy toward the Canaanites, as articulated in several biblical sources. It is explained in Notes to Numbers 21:32, and discussed in the Comments to Numbers 21 (also see Notes to Num 14:24, 24:18, 32:39). The syntax of the statement *wehôraštem mippenêkem* "You must drive out from before you; from your presence" makes it clear that the previous inhabitants were to be expelled or deported.

you shall ruin all of their figurative objects

The present statement parallels Deuteronomy 12:2–3 in its usage of the verb *ʾibbēd* "to destroy" in reference to the appurtenances of pagan cult sites in Canaan, but the appurtenances themselves are designated differently. Deuteronomy speaks of *meqômôt* "cult sites," a northern Israelite term, whereas here we read of *bāmôt* "cult platforms," a Judean term; there of *maṣṣēbôt* "cultic stelae," *ʾašērîm* "Asherah-pillars" and *pesîlîm* "statues," and here of *maskiyyōt* "figurative objects," and *ṣalmê maṣṣēkôt* "molten images." The Hebrew *maśkît* is best derived from the verb *s-k-h* "to view, gaze upon," hence "figurative drawing." In Leviticus 26:1, the term occurring in a similar statement is *ʾeben maśkît* "decorated stone," perhaps descriptive of an ornamented pavement on which worshippers stood (Levine 1989b:181, s.v. Lev 26:1, and cf. Ezek 8:10–12, Prov 25:11). The composite term *ṣalmê massēkōt* incorporates Common Semitic *ṣelem* "statue" (see *HALAT*:963, s.v. *ṣlm* II, for cognates in the Semitic languages). The term *massēkah* designates an image made by pouring (the verb *n-s-k*) molten metal into a mold (Exod 34:17, Lev 19:4, Deut 27:15).

and all of their cult platforms you must destroy.

The term *bamah*, plural *bāmôt*, is frequent in Kings, occurring repeatedly in redactional statements critical of those very Judean kings who failed to remove the *bāmôt* from the land (1 Kings 22:44, 2 Kings 12:4, 14:4, 15:4, 35). In the Mesha Stele (line 27), we read that Mesha built *bt bmt* "a *bāmāh* temple" (= Hebrew: *bêt bāmôt*) the same as Jeroboam I built, according to 1 Kings 12:31. What these kings did was to enclose an existing open-air cult-platform in a building, thereby creating a temple. The term *bamah* itself literally means "back, shoulder; the upper part of the body," as we know from Ugaritic literature, where reference is made to loading goods and persons on the back (*bmt*) of large animals. Thus we have, in the Baal cycle, the parallelism of *bmt ʿr// bmt pḥl* "the back of an ass/the back of an ox" (*KTU*$_2$ 18, s.v. 1.4, IV, lines 14–15). As such, the architectural term, *bāmāh* "cult platform" would reflect the sense of being raised above the ground, a meaning that corresponds to the highest parts of an animal's body.

The Akkadian evidence is more complicated but highly informative, nonetheless. Akkadian *bamtu* (often read *pantu,* or *bandu*) "chest, thorax" (CAD *B*:78–79, s.v. *bamtu* B), occurs in El Amarna Akkadian in the conventional epistolary salutation: "Seven times each I prostrate myself on the front and the back (*i-na pa-an-te-e ù ṣi-ru-ma;* EA 232:10; variant readings in Moran 1993:291). The Akkadian evidence also leads us to the third aspect of the Hebrew terms, especially of the plural, *bāmôt,* in the idiom *ʿal bāmôtê* (*Kethib*) *ʾereṣ* "on the high places of the earth" (Deut 32:13, Isa 58:14, Micah 1:3), and other topographic and even cosmic characterizations expressing height, such as *bāmotê ʿāb* "on the back of the dense cloud" (Isa 14:14, Amos 4:13), or *bāmotê yām* "the heights of the sea" (Job 9:8). This is because the Akkadian plural, *bamātu* (CAD *B*:76–77), like the Hebrew plural *bāmôt,* means "open country, highland" and is a synonym of *ṣēru,* with the same set of meanings (CAD *Ṣ*:138–147, s.v. *ṣēru,* especially meanings 1 and 3). Putting all of the evidence together we find three aspects: (a) Ugaritic and Akkadian meanings expressing the high or upper parts of the body, human or animal; (b) Hebrew and Akkadian meanings of the plural *bāmôt/bamātu* expressing topographic and cosmic height; and (c) Hebrew *bāmāh,* and the Moabite plural, *bmt,* a raised, cult platform (Hoftijzer-Jongeling 1995:167–168, s.v. *bmh*). This lexeme reflects an elaborate set of semantic transactions.

53. *for to you have I granted the land to seize as a possession.* In part, this verse effectively repeats Numbers 33:52, just above, adding the divine commandment to settle in the land: *wiyšabtem bāk* "you shall settle in it." There is also a statement that the God of Israel has granted the land to the people of Israel, addressed in the second person, with the order to "take possession of it" (*lārešet ʾōtāh*). The Hebrew verb *yāraš* may connote inheritance, as from parent to heir, but in conquest traditions, affecting Israelites and others, it more often than not refers to seizing the land from its former inhabitants (Deut 1:8, 21, 2:21, 24, 5:23, Jer 49:1–2). Overall, the present statement of grant, an act by the Hebrew verb *n-t-n* "to grant" in the formula *nātan—lārešet* "grant—to take possession" resonates with Deuteronomy (3:18, 5:28, 9:6, 12:1, 15:4, 25:19, 19:2, 4, 21, and see Notes to Num 13:30; Levine 1993:357–358).

54. *You shall allocate the land to yourselves.* The land, after its conquest, is to be allocated to the Israelites by lot according to clans (Hebrew *mišpāḥôt*) commensurate with the population of each clan. On the sense of the Hithpael, *hitnaḥēl* "to receive as an estate; to allocate as an estate," see Notes to Numbers 32:18. This verse effectively restates Numbers 26:52–56 (especially Num 26:54), and in Notes to Numbers 26:52–56, the formulation and terms of reference of the present verse are explained and the use of lots in the proportional distribution of land is clarified.

55–56. *But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land.* This section concludes with a stern admonition: Failure to drive out all of the former inhabitants will produce conflict. It begins by restating Numbers 33:52, just above, and goes on to predict, in second person address, that any of the former inhabitants whom you, the Israelites, "allow to remain" (Hebrew *tôtîrû*) would be troublesome. They would be "prickles" (Hebrew *śikkîm*) in their eyes and "thorns" (Hebrew *ṣenînīm*) in their sides. Hebrew *śikkîm* occurs only here. It may be cognate with terms for tools, such as Aramaic *sakkîn* "knife" (written with a *samekh*), but this is uncertain (see Hoftijzer-Jongeling 1995:785, s.v. *skh*$_2$, *skyn*). Hebrew *seninim*, a variant of *sinnim* (Prov 22:5, Job 5:5), occurs only in the similar admonition of Joshua 23:13 (*HALAT*:970–971, s.v. *ṣēn*; 972, s.v. *ṣenînîm*). These peoples will wage war against you in your own land. On the Hebrew verb *ṣ-r-r* "to attack," see Notes to Numbers 25:16. The result will be that the defeat God had planned to bring upon these peoples will be brought upon the Israelites themselves. The notion that God "plans, envisions" (the Piel *dimmāh*) future events is expressed in Isaiah 14:24: "YHWH of Hosts has sworn as follows: Is it not just as I had planned (*ka'ašer dimmîtî*), so has it come about; and just as I have counseled (*weka'ašer yā'aṣtî*), that very thing shall arise?"

In Deuteronomy, the same policy is expressed differently, but not entirely so. "You shall devour all of the peoples whom YHWH, your God, delivers into your power; you shall show them no pity, nor shall you worship their gods, for that will be a trap (Hebrew *môqēš*) for you" (Deut 7:16). In the ensuing passage (Deut 7:17–26), the Israelites are warned against letting up on the total defeat and deportation of the Canaanite peoples and all other enemy nations, as long as this objective takes. These will not be driven out all at once, but eventually their name shall be obliterated from under the heavens. Once again, the Israelites are commanded not to tolerate the worship of pagan gods, so as not to become *ḥērem* "condemned" as is the destiny of pagan nations (see Notes to Num 21:2–3).

PART XI.

NUMBERS 34: THE BOUNDARIES OF CANAAN AND THE TERRITORIES OF THE TRIBES

◆

INTRODUCTION

Numbers 34, a priestly document, comes near the end of Numbers, after the Israelites of the Exodus had died away, and the new generation had made its way through Sinai and Transjordan to the eastern shore of the Jordan. It remained only to outline the boundaries of Canaan, the Promised Land, and to establish the mechanism for its allocation to the tribes of Israel. Accordingly, Numbers 34 consists of two discrete sections: Numbers 34:1–15 present an outline of the borders of the Promised Land, and Numbers 34:16–29 list the names of the leaders of the people, Eleazar, the priest, and Joshua, son of Nun, and of the tribal representatives, who were enlisted to apportion the Land of Canaan to the Israelite people as it had been delimited. More precisely, the actual map of the Promised Land begins in Numbers 34:2b, with the words *zōʾt hāʾāreṣ* "this the land," Numbers 34:1–2a are a superscription, and Numbers 34:13–15 are a postscript.

It has been suggested that the borders projected in Numbers 34:2b–12 correlate with the zone of Egyptian hegemony in Canaan during the latter part of the thirteenth century B.C.E., after the Battle of Kedesh on the Orontes and enactment of the Egyptian-Hittite treaty between Rameses II and Hattushili III had effectively redefined respective Egyptian and Hittite spheres of influence in the Levant. A patently late document, Numbers 34:1–12 may have served the priestly writers as a utopian outline of the Promised Land. Its correlation with other lists of towns and borders, especially those preserved in Joshua 15 and Ezekiel 47, will be disscussed in the Comments to Numbers 34.

As for the list of tribal leaders in Numbers 34:13–29, it belongs to the Judahite group of registers, in which Judah is the foremost tribe, rather than to those in which Reuben is listed as the firstborn. In the Comments to Numbers 34, the present record will be compared with similar tribal lists occurring in Numbers 1–2, 10, 13, and 26, as well as with relevant information provided elsewhere in biblical literature.

TRANSLATION

34 [1]YHWH addressed Moses as follows:

[2]Issue a command to the Israelite people and say to them: You are now about to enter the Land of Canaan. This is the land that shall fall to you as an apportioned estate, the Land of Canaan according to its boundaries.

[3]Your southern limit shall be [charted] from the Wilderness of Zin, abutting Edom, thus placing the eastern point of your southern border at the edge of the Dead Sea.

[4]Your boundary shall then go around, passing southward of the ascent

of Akrabbim, and traversing through Zin; its concluding stretches shall pass southward of Kadesh Barnea, exiting at Hazar-Addar, and reaching Azmon.

[5]From Azmon, the border shall go around, toward the Wadi of Egypt, with its concluding stretches reaching the Sea.

[6]As for the western border: The Great Sea shall serve you as a border; this shall be your western border.

[7]Thus shall be your northern border: From the Great Sea you shall chart yourselves a line to Mount Hor.

[8]From Mount Hor, you chart a line to Lebo, of Hamath; the concluding stretches of the border shall reach Zedad.

[9]The border shall then stretch to Ziphron, with its concluding stretches reaching Hazar-Enan. This shall be your northern border.

[10]You shall chart for yourselves a line for the eastern border from Hazar-Enan to Shepham.

[11]The border shall descend from Shepham to *the Riblah,* to the east of Ain; the border shall descend, abutting the slope of the Sea of Chinnereth, to the east.

[12]The border shall descend along the Jordan, with its concluding stretches reaching the Dead Sea. This shall be your land, delimited by its surrounding borders.

[13]Moses then commanded the Israelite people as follows: This is the land that you shall grant as an estate by lot, which YHWH commanded to grant to the nine tribes, and one-half of a tribe.

[14]For the tribe of the Reubenites have already taken possession, according to their patriarchal "houses," as have the Gadites, according to their patriarchal "houses"; and one-half of the tribe of Manasseh have taken possession of their estates.

[15]The two tribes and one-half of a tribe have taken possession of their estates on the other side of the Jordan from Jericho, all the way to the east.

[16]Then YHWH addressed Moses as follows:

[17]Following are the names of the personages who shall apportion land to you as estates: Eleazar, the priest, and Joshua, son of Nun.

[18]You shall enlist one chieftain, one chieftain from each tribe to apportion the land.

[19]Following are the names of the personages: Representing the tribe of Judah—Caleb, son of Jephunneh.

[20]And representing the Simeonite tribe—Samuel, son of Ammihud.

[21]Representing the tribe of Benjamin—Elidad, son of Chislon.

[22]And representing the Danite tribe—a chieftain—Bukki, son of Jogli.

[23]Representing the Josephites: Representing the Manassite tribe, a chieftain—Hanniel, son of Ephod.

[24]And representing the Ephraimite tribe, a chieftain—Kemuel, son of Shiphtan.

[25]And representing the Zebulunite tribe, a chieftain—Elizaphan, son of Parnach.

[26]And representing the Issacharite tribe, a chieftain—Paltiel, son of Azzan.

[27]Representing the Asherite tribe, a chieftain—Ahihud, son of Shelomi.

[28]And representing the Naphtalite tribe, a chieftain—Pedahel, son of Ammihud.

[29]These are the ones whom YHWH commanded to install the Israelite people in their estates in the Land of Canaan.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 34:1–15: THE BORDERS OF GREATER CANAAN

2. *Issue a command to the Israelite people.* The formula *ṣaw 'et benê Yiśrā'ēl* "Issue a command to the Israelite people," is frequent in Numbers (5:2, 28:2, 35:2), and characteristic of superscriptions in priestly law and ritual (see Notes to Num 35:2). The force of *kî* when followed by a participle is not "when," as it is when *kî* is followed by the imperfect, *kî tābō'û* "When you enter" (Num 15:2). The sense is rather "Now you are about to enter," similar to the sense of *kî* followed by the participle in Numbers 33:51, 35:10, *kî 'attem ʿōberîm* "Now you are about to cross over." The force of *kî* is thus emphatic. The construction *hā 'āreṣ Kenāʿan* "The land, Canaan," in which *Kenāʿan* appears to be in apposition, is unique to this passage, and its syntax is unusual. It may have been an afterthought, so that the verse originally read: *kî tābō'û 'el hā'āreṣ* "When you enter the land," a rather frequent introductory clause (Exod 12:25, Lev 19:23, 23:10, 25:2). A later redactor may have interpolated the name Canaan for identification, or simply added it erroneously from the latter part of the verse in the line below, where we have the usual construction: *'ereṣ Kenāʿan* "the Land of Canaan."

This is the land that shall fall to you

The actual map of the Promised Land begins here. The function of the verb *nāpal* "to fall," and other forms of the same verb, in contexts pertaining to apportionment and inheritance, requires comment. The idiom *napal le-*X *benaḥalāh* "to fall to X as an apportioned estate" occurs in Ezekiel 47:14: "This land shall fall to you (*wenāpelāh . . . lākem*) as an apportioned estate (*benaḥalāh*)." Also note the conclusion of the etiological caption in Judges 18:1: "In those days there was no king in Israel, and in those days the Danite tribe was seeking for itself an apportioned estate in which to settle, for [such] had not fallen to him (*kî lō' nāpelāh lô*) until that day, amidst the tribes of Israel, as an apportioned estate (*benaḥalāh*)." The Hiphil reflex *hippîl—benaḥalāh* "to cast down—as an apportioned estate," and variations of the same, are also attested (Ezek 45:1, 47:22, and cf. Jos 13:6, 23:4). It would seem that we are dealing with an abbreviated idiom, in which the term *gôrāl* "lot" is unstated but understood: *nāpal—(hag)gôral* "(the) lot fell to, or upon X." Its reflex employs the Hiphil, *hippîl—(hag)gôrāl* "He cast the lot" (cf. Isa 34:17, Ezek 24:6, Jonah 1:7, Esther 3:7, 9:24, Neh 10:35, 11:1, 1 Chron 24:5, 31, 25:8, 26:13–14, and, by extension, Prov 1:14). This is a late idiom, given its distribution in the biblical sources, and it is prominent in priestly writings, thus linking Numbers 34 to various themes in the book of Ezekiel, especially to those of Ezekiel 47.

according to its boundaries.

The Hebrew term *gebûl* "boundary, border; bounded territory" designates both charted boundaries and natural ones, like the sea, rivers and mountains. Cognates of Hebrew *gebûl* enjoy wide distribution in the West Semitic languages, being attested in Phoenician, in the dialect of Sam'al and in Old Aramaic. By metonymy, *gebûl* can refer to the people inhabiting a certain territory (Hoftijzer-Jongeling 1995:209–210, s.v. *gbl*$_{1,2}$).

3–5. *Your southern limit.* The geographic outlines of the Land of Canaan begin with the southern limits of the land, proceed to the western boundary, the sea, then move to the north, and end with the eastern boundary. The Hebrew Bible knows of more than one system of marking directions, and also mixes different systems, which is the case here. Thus, Hebrew *negeb* "south," locative *negbāh,* actually means "arid" (cf. Num 13:17, 22, 29), and thus characterizes desert areas with their wind and dust storms (Isa 21:1) and their wadis (Ps 126:4). Hebrew *qedem* "east," locative *qēdmāh,* actually means "front, facing," and is directional, indicating that one is literally "oriented," facing east. Hebrew *yām* "west," locative *yammāh* (pausal), actually means "sea, seaward," reflecting the reality that Canaan has the Mediterranean Sea as its western limit. Hebrew *ṣāpôn* "north," locative *ṣāpônāh* (cf. Num 2:25, 3:35) may mean "hidden," reflecting the reality of the mountain ranges that lay to the north of Canaan and of Syria-Mesopotamia. The perception would be that what lies beyond the mountains is hidden. The cultural significance of the present sequence of directions will be explored in the Comments to Numbers 34.

Numbers 34:3 appears to be redundant. It begins by projecting a southern limit (Hebrew *pē'āh*) and then pinpoints the eastern point of origin of the southern border (*gebûl*). The Hebrew term *pē'āh* "corner, edge"—of the head or face, which may refer to the edge of a field, as in Leviticus 19:27, 23:22, here enjoys a particular nuance, one evident as well in the boundary descriptions of Joshua 15:5, 18:14–15, 30 and frequently in those of Ezekiel 47–48. In Notes to Numbers 24:17, it is explained that *pa'atê Mô'āb* "the brow of Moab," is contrasted with **weqodqōd benê Šēt* "the *pate* of the sons of Seth." Reference there is presumably to outlying areas of the Land of Moab, in contrast to interior mountainous areas. In the present boundary descriptions, the sense of Hebrew *pē̆ʾāh* seems to be "limit," the furthermost or outermost extent. This is similar to the sense of Hebrew *pē̆ʾāh* in descriptions of the Tabernacle's dimensions (Exod 27:9, 12–13, and frequently in Exodus 38), as well as in the measurements of the towns of the Levites, according to Numbers 35:5 (see Notes). In this sense, Hebrew *pē̆ʾāh* is cognate with Akkadian *pātu* (also written *pattu*) "edge, border," likewise employed in geographical descriptions (*AHw*:849, s.v. *pātu*[*m*], and see below, in Notes to Num 34:5).

from the Wilderness of Zin, abutting Edom

The southern limit (*peʾat negeb*) begins in the Wilderness of Zin "abutting Edom" (*ʿal yedê ʾEdôm*). Like prepositional *ʿal yad* "near" (Exod 2:5, Num 13:29), Hebrew *ʿal yedê* connotes geographic proximity, cf. Judges 11:26: "And the towns lying near the Arnon" (*ʿal yedê ʾArnôn*). The Wilderness of Zin designates a desert area in the southernmost part of Canaan, west of a line running southward from the Dead Sea to Elath (see Notes to Num 20:1; Levine 1993:487, and Seely 1992, in *ABD* VI:1095–1096). This "line" does, indeed, border on the homeland of Edom, which lies south of Moab (Map 4). The second part of Numbers 34:3 restates the matter as: *miqqeṣē̆h yām hammelaḥ* "from the edge (that is, the southern edge) of the Dead Sea." The name *Ṣin* is realized as a locative, *Ṣinnāh* "through Zin" just below, in Numbers 34:4.

Numbers 34:4–5 introduce several technical usages. There is, first of all, the Niphal form of the verb *s-b-b* "to surround, turn," namely, *wenāsab* "It (= the border) shall go around"—certain towns. Cf. similar border descriptions in Joshua 15:3, 10, 16:6, 18:14, 19:14, and in Jeremiah 31:38. The southern border will go around the ascent of Akrabbim (*maʿalē̆h ʿAqrabbîm*) to the south, and pass through the Wilderness of Zin (locative *Ṣinnah*). The component *ʿaqrabbîm* means "scorpions," and may be identical to hieroglyphic *ʿqrbt* mentioned in the topographical lists of Amenhotep III that are displayed in his mortuary temple at Thebes. This may be the very site known by the variant writing *mqrpt* in the Palestine List of Thutmose II. This would indicate a route that was followed by periodic Egyptian expeditions. In any event, the "ascent" is to be identified with one of the passes between the Arabah and Wadi Fiqre and Kurnub, perhaps Rugum Ṣfar, Naqb eṣ-Ṣfar, or Qaṣr, or Qaṣr Ṣfar, all way stations on the Nabataean trade routes (Görg 1992, in *ABD* I:141).

Repeatedly, the boundary descriptions designate "the concluding stretches," Hebrew *tôsā̆ʾōt*, literally, where the boundary "comes out." This term is also frequent in the geographic descriptions of Joshua 15, 17, and 19. In Ezekiel 48:30, we read of *tôṣeʾōt hāʿîr* "the exits of the town." The southern border stretched southward of Kadesh Barnea, the Deuteronomist's name for Kadesh (see the Introduction to Levine 1993:53–56, s.v. A.5.a, and Notes to Num 13:26; Levine 1993:355, and the Comments to Num 13–14; Levine 1993:372–375).

The border came out at Hazar-Addar (*Ḥaṣar-ʾAddār*), probably a variant of *ʾAddār* in Joshua 15:3, meaning "the enclosed court/town plot of Addar." Its precise location is unknown. As for Azmon (*ʿAṣmōn*, cf. Jos 15:4), it has been tentatively identified with Ain Qoseimeh, a spring in the vicinity of Ain Qudeirat-Kadesh Barnea, and also with Ain Muweilih, where archaeological surveys by Rothenberg and Aharoni in 1961 revealed a way station on the road to Sinai during the Iron I Period (Kotter 1992, in *ABD* I:540).

The southern border continued to the Wadi of Egypt (*naḥal Miṣrayim*), a name also found in Joshua 15:4, 47, 1 Kings 8:65, Ezek 47:19, 48:28, 2 Chron 7:8). It proverbially signifies the southern border of the Promised Land in 2 Kings 24:7, Isaiah 27:12. As *URU naḥal Muṣur*, it occurs in a summary inscription of Tiglath Pileser III, mentioned after his conquest of Gaza (Tadmor 1966). In several inscriptions of Sargon II, we find the description *sa patti URU naḥal Muṣur* "which is on the border of the Wadi of Egypt." A location given in an annal of Esarhaddon suggests that this wadi is to be identified as Nahal Bezor (Na'aman 1979).

6. *As for the western border.* Hebrew *gebûl yām* means "the western border," in context. The wording is a bit odd: *wehāyāh lākem hayyām haggādôl ûgebûl* (perhaps read: *ligbûl*) "The Great Sea shall serve you as a border." Note that below, in Numbers 34:10, the text reads: *ligbûl qedmāh* "for the eastern border."

7–9. *you shall chart yourselves a line to Mount Hor.* The description continues with the northern border. The verb *t-ʾ-h* "to draw a line" is a variant of *t-w-h* with similar meaning, which, in turn, is denominative of *tāw* "mark," namely, "write a *tāw*." This is demonstrated by the cognate syntax of Ezekiel 9:4: *wehitwîtā tāw* "You shall draw a mark." Here, we have a simple stem: *tetāʾû* "you shall draw a line," and below, in Numbers 34:10, a conflate Hiphil form, *wehitʾawwîtem* (<*wehitwîtem*>), with the same meaning. The sense is that one would draw a line in the north from the Great Sea to a northern mountain named *Hōr Hāhār* "Mount Hor," distinct from the southern *Hōr Hāhār* near Kadesh Barnea where Aaron had died (Num 20:22–28, 33:38). From that mountain near the coast, the line would run inland to Lebo of Hamath (*Lebōʾ Ḥamāt*), the furthest extent of the reconnaissance of the spies according to the priestly tradition of Numbers 13:21 (see Notes to Num 13:21; Levine 1993:324). This toponym is attested in Egyptian sources as *rwbj*, or in syllabic writing as *la-bi-ʾu*, and in Assyrian texts as *La-ab-ʾu-u*, a town near Riblah at the source of the Orontes river, south of Hamath, and most likely to be identified with modern Lebweh (Wei 1992, in *ABD* III:36–37).

From Lebo of Hamath, the border was charted inland to Zedad (*Ṣedād*), which is best identified with Zadad, a site located east of the road from Damascus to Aleppo, via Homs, near Riblah. This site is mentioned in Ezekiel 47:13, in an alternate description of the northern border of Israel (Thompson

1992, in *ABD* VI:1068). From Zedad the border continued via Ziphron (*Ṣiprōn*), an unidentified site mentioned only here, to Hazar-Enan (*Ḥaṣar ʿÊnān*), a toponym also mentioned in Ezekiel's vision of a restored Israel (Ezek 47:17–18, 48:1). It is best identified with the desert oasis of Qayatein sixty miles east of Lebo of Hamath, and about seventy miles northeast of Damascus (Herion 1992, in *ABD* III:84).

10–12. *The border shall descend.* The description continues with the eastern border, moving from north to south. The text reads: *wehitʾawwîtem lākem ligebûl qēdmāh* "You shall chart for yourselves a line for the eastern border" (see Notes to Num 34:8, above). The directional sense of the verb *y-r-d* "to descend" in geographic descriptions is to proceed southward. The location of Shepham (*Šepām*) is unknown from any source, and is mentioned only here.

from Shepham to the Riblah

It is very unlikely that the important historical site of Riblah on the Orontes, "in the district of Hamath" (2 Kings 23:33–34, 25:21, Jer 39:5, 52:9, 27) is intended here. First of all, as Gray (Gray-*ICC*:461) notes, that toponym is always written *Riblāh* without the definite article. More important is the out of the way location of the known Riblah, considerably north of Zedad and Lebo of Hamath. Either the text is corrupt, or the author of Numbers 34 was consciously referring to the known Riblah (Shabtuna of the Egyptian records) because of its importance in the ancient Near Eastern history as the site of the standoff between Egypt and the Hittites. After all, the boundaries of Greater Israel, as projected in Numbers 34, seem to reflect the situation subsequent to the Battle of Kedesh on the Orontes.

The border went southward, east of Ain (*ʿÂin*), a toponym that simply means "spring, well," and that has not been identified, in any event. The border continued to "go down," by the mountain ridge abutting the Sea of Chinnereth (*yām Kinneret*), to the east, along the Jordan to the Dead Sea (literally, the Salt Sea—*yām hammelaḥ*). The Hebrew *kātēp*, literally "shoulder," is used in geographic descriptions to designate a mountain ridge or slope, or simply a high approach. Cf. *ketep har yeʿārîm* "the slope of Mount Jearim" (Jos 15:10–11, and also Jos 15:8, 18:12–19). The border "abutted," Hebrew *māḥāh* (also *māḥāʾ*), which means "to strike, crash," as one strikes with his palms or arm (Isa 55:12, Ezek 25:6, Ps 98:8).

In summary, the land delimited in Numbers 34:2b–12 reached from the Jordan to the Mediterranean. In the south, it began near Raphia in the Gaza strip, and extended very far north to Lebo of Hamath, on a line to the east of Beirut-Byblos. It is generally recognized that these extended borders are utopian, a subject to be discussed in the Comments to Numbers 34.

13–15. The postscript begins here, with the order to implement the apportionment of the land as described and in compliance with the earlier commandment in Numbers 26:52–56. In that earlier passage, the point of reference was the people, registered by tribes, to whom the land was to be apportioned, whereas here, the land has been delimited by its outer limits in four directions. Thus, Numbers 34:13 is resumptive of Numbers 34:2b and 12 *zō't* ha'ares "This is the land." The Hithpael *titnaḥalû* has active-transitive force, taking a direct object, *'ōtāh*, hence: "You shall grant as an estate" (see Notes to Numbers 32:18–19). The land west of the Jordan was for the nine and one-half tribes. There is full acknowledgment of the contents of Numbers 32, according to which the tribes of Gad, Reuben and half of the tribe of Manasseh had already been granted their *nahalah* east of the Jordan. This is stated quaintly as: *mē ʿēber leyardēn Yerēḥô, qedmāh mizrāḥāh* "on the other side of the Jordan from Jericho, all the way to the east."

NOTES TO NUMBERS 34:16–29: THE APPORTIONMENT OF CANAAN TO THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL

16–18. *Following are the names of the personages.* Eleazar, the priest, and Joshua, son of Nun, presided over the apportionment of the land, assisted by one "chieftain" (*nāśî'*) from each of the tribes. Usage of the simple stem *naḥal* in Numbers 34:17–18, 29 is unusual. Normally, the Hebrew simple stem, *naḥal*, means "to receive an estate," whereas the sense of conveying an estate to another requires the Hiphil *hinḥîl* (Deut 3:28, 12:10, 21:16, 32:8). But here, it is quite clear that the leaders were to "convey" (*yinḥalû; linḥōl*) the land to the Israelite people, and this act is expressed by forms of the simple stem, imperfect *yinḥalû* and infinitival *linḥōl*. This meaning is elsewhere attested in Exodus 34:9: "May you forgive our sin and grant us our *naḥalāh*" (*ûneḥaltānû*). Actually, this is the sense of the Akkadian cognate *naḫālu* at Mari (*CAD* N, I:126, s.v. *naḫālu* B). This interpretation would seem to be supported by the use of the Piel *lenāḥēl* "to convey as *naḥalāh*" by the redactor who added a postscript to the list of chieftains in Numbers 34:29, probably in order to clear up any ambiguity about who was to do the apportioning (see below).

19–28. The list of *neśî'îm* begins with Judah and includes Manasseh, without specifying that only half of the tribe was to be granted an estate west of the Jordan. As expected, the tribes of Reuben and Gad are omitted. Except for Caleb, son of Jephunneh, a known personage already listed in Numbers 13:6 as the *nāśî'* of the tribe of Judah, most of the other names of chieftains are new to the Book of Numbers. The names of the chieftains can be grouped in various ways. Some of the names are indeed known from other biblical sources, but nowhere do they refer to the person designated here. Consequently, the names given here do not identify these persons. All that we can say is that these are real names. Those of this group include the name Samuel (*Šemû'ēl*). There is also the Simeonite patronymic *ʿAmmîhûd* "the Majestic one is my kinsman," associated with various personages, including the Naphtalite by the same name in the present list (below, in Num 34:28, and cf. 2 Sam 13:37 [the king of Geshur], 1 Chron 9:4). The name *ʾElîdād* is best taken as a variant of *ʾEldād* "El is the friend" (cf. Akkadian *Dadi-īlu*) that is known from Numbers 11:26–27, where the person in question is identified as one of the elders of Israel. Hence: "My god is the friend." The name of the Ephraimite chieftain, Kemuel (*Qemû'ēl*), is known from the family of Nahor as *ʾabî ʾArām* "the father of Aram" (Gen 22:21), and as the name of a leading Levite in 1 Chron 27:17. The name Elizaphan (*ʾElîṣāpān*, variant: *ʾElṣāpān*) "El has protected" is well attested, but primarily as that of a leading Levite (Exod 6:22, Num 3:30, and see 1 Chron 15:8, 2 Chron 29:13). The name Paltiel (*Palṭîʾēl*) "El is my rescue" is attested in the shortened form Palti (*Palṭî*), the name of the chieftain of Benjamin in Numbers 13:9, and of Michal's first husband in 1 Sam 25:44, 2 Sam 3:15. The name Bukki (*Buqqî*, variously *Buqqîyāh*), of unknown meaning, is attested as a late name in Ezra 7:4, 1 Chron 5:31, 6:36. The name Hanniel (*Ḥannî'ēl*) "El has been gracious to me" is elsewhere attested only in 1 Chron 7:39.

The following names are unique in the Hebrew Bible to the present list: (a) Chislon (*Kislôn*) "one of hope, trust" (*HALAT*:467 lists a Ugaritic name, *Ksln*); Jogli (*Yogli*), of unknown meaning; (c) Ephod (*ʾĒpōd*), which means "costly, embroidered garment," and designates the vestment worn by priests (Levine 1989b:50, s.v. Lev 8:7); (d) Shiphtan (*Šipṭān*) "judge; the just," which, however, incorporates the verbal root *š-p-t* "to judge, vindicate," a frequent component of personal names; (e) Azzan (*ʿAzzān*) "strong one," incorporating the verbal root *ʿ-z-z* "to be strong, fierce," and (e) Pedahel (*Pedāh ʾēl*) "El had redeemed," similar to *Pedāhṣûr* "the Rock has redeemed" (Num 1:10, 2:20, 10:23), the name of a Manassite leader.

Of particular interest are two names that are attested in extra-biblical sources of the Achaemenid Period. The first is the name Parnach (*Parnāk*), that of the father of Elizaphan, chieftain of the Zebulunites (Num 34:25). This is an Elamite name attested at Persepolis as *Parnakka*, and appearing on Aramaic seals from Persepolis as *Parnāk bar ʾAršām* "Parnak, son of Arsames." It is also attested in two Neo-Babylonian economic texts from the reign of Cambyses, as *par-na-ak-ka* "majestic splendor, brilliance," in Achaemenid Persian: *farnah*. The genitive affix *-ak* in the personal name *Parnakka* yields an adjectival sense: "one possessed of splendor." In Greek, the name appears as *Pharnakes*, Septuagint: *Phar(a)nax*. The appearance of this personal name indicates, at the very least, that the present list was redacted in the Achaemenid Period if not actually composed at that time (Greenfield 1971, in *EB* VI:585).

The second name is Shelomi (Šelōmî, consonantal *šlmy <Šelōmaî>*), a shortened form of the frequent *Šelemyāh* (<*Šelōmîyāh*>) "YH is my covenant brother, ally." On a stamp we find: *šlmy hʿd* "Selomai, the witness," and on an Aramaic ostracon from Arad of the fourth century B.C.E. we find the personal name *Šlmy* (Avigad-Sass 1997:536). The problems posed by this list, as well as the enlightenment provided by it, will be discussed in the Comments to Numbers 34.

29. *to install the Israelite people in their estates.* This is a postscript that uses the Piel *lenahel* "to apportion as estates" instead of the simple stem, *linḥōl*, as above, in Numbers 34:17–18.

COMMENTS

Numbers 34 is of two parts: Numbers 34:1–15 present what amounts to a map of the Promised Land, and Numbers 34:16–29 list the tribal leaders who are to assist Eleazar, the priest, and Joshua, son of Nun, in apportioning this land to the Cisjordanian tribes. As has been noted, Numbers 34:2b–12 may be considered a coherent document, to which a superscription (Num 34:1–2a) and a postscript (Num 34:13–15) have been added. The actual document begins with the words *zōʾt hāʾāreṣ* "this is the land."

COMMENT 1: THE MAP OF THE PROMISED LAND

The first feature to be noticed is that the directions in Numbers 34:2b–12 begin with the southern border, proceed to the west, then to the north, and end with the eastern border. The terms are *negeb* "south," *yām* "the sea, west," *ṣāpôn* "north," and *qē̆dmāh* "to the east." Biblical literature attests several directional sequences as well as employing differing terms for the directions themselves. External sources from various periods of antiquity also differ in their sequences, with the eastern "orientation" often competing for the initial position with a southern perspective. In the present case, as in Joshua 15, a source to be studied presently for its relevance to Numbers 34:1–5, directions also begin with the south (*negeb*). In Joshua 15 the reason is clearly indicated: The territory of Judah is being delimited first. In view of the fact that further on in Numbers 34 the list of tribal chieftains begins with Judah, the same basis is to be assumed here. The overall effect of the description is to encircle the land.

The import of Numbers 34:2b–12 has been studied most recently by Kallai (1997). He discusses three biblical conceptions of the land: (a) the patriarchal boundaries, (b) the Land of Canaan, and (c) the Land of Israel. Numbers 34:2 speaks of the Land of Canaan, and it is this conception that should be explored in greatest detail. The limits of the Land of Canaan delineated here correspond in part to those in Ezekiel 47:15–20, which, however, begin with the northern border, proceed to the east, then to the south, and end with the sea as the western border. Also to be factored in is the information provided by Joshua 13:2–6 and Judges 3:1–3, which speak of the limits of Joshua's conquests, and delimit "the remaining land" (*hāʾāreṣ hannĭšʾeret*) to be allotted to the Israelite tribes in due course (cf. Jos 11:17, 12:7). Likewise relevant is the promise to Abram (Gen 15:18) of the land reaching from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates. The promise of this greatly enlarged land is repeated in Deuteronomy 1:7, Joshua 1:4, and in 2 Kings 24:7.

More to the point are the similarities in detail and formulation between Numbers 34:2b–12 and Joshua 15:1–12, a delimitation of the territory of Judah. In fact, the southern border of Judah as recorded in Joshua 15:1–4 may be the actual source of Numbers 34:2b–5, with the southern border of Judah being presented as the southern border of the entire land. Both Numbers 34 and Joshua 15, and following, use terms such as *tôṣāʾōt* "concluding stretch," and verbal *wenāsab* "it shall go around," that are basic to the composition of Numbers 34:2b–12, and there are further correspondences of this type. It was the view of Alt (1953–59, II:276–288) that the town lists of Joshua 15 reflect realities of the reign of Josiah, ca. 640–609 B.C.E. (Na'aman 1991). If this derivation is correct, then we may date Numbers 34 subsequent to the reign of Josiah, and consider it to have been based on records composed during that period.

Information on the source or sources for the northern boundary are more difficult to cull. From the coast, at a point slightly north of Byblos, the border moved eastward, swerving down through Aphekah (Jos 13:4) to Lebo of Hamath, which represents the northern border of the land in Numbers 13:21, a priestly verse. It is the northernmost point on the route of the spies sent to survey Canaan. As noted, Lebo of Hamath is listed as part of "the remaining land" in Joshua 13:5 (cf. Judg 3:3), and as the northeastern extremity of the restored land in Ezekiel 47:20, a source that can be dated no earlier than the exilic period. Zedad (Num 34:8) is also mentioned in Ezekiel 47:15 as being on the northern border, as is Hazar-Enan (Num 34:9) in Ezekiel 47:16.

The delineation of the eastern border is spotty, with several unidentified sites. If reference is to the historical Riblah, which is problematic geographically, it is to be noted that biblical literature knows of Riblah only in connection with the events of the last days of the kingdom of Judah. This suggests that, as in the case of the southern limits of the land, the delineation of the northern and eastern borders was based on relatively late sources, reaching into the postexilic period.

The upshot of the map projected in Numbers 34:2b–12 is that the Jordan was, indeed, the eastern border of Canaan, but that north of the Jordan, which is to say, from the Sea of Kinnereth northward, the projection of the land extended considerably to the east, with its northeastern tip at Zedad and Hazar-Enan. All that is said about the north-south line of the eastern border is that it abutted the eastern slopes of the Sea of Chinnereth near its southern limit. To the north, it reached near to the southern border of Hamath in Syria. The fact that the line of the northern border began at the coast just north of Byblos meant that a good part of Phoenicia was inevitably included in Canaan.

As regards Israelite habitation, the map projected in Numbers 34:2b–12 is inaccurate in a number of respects other than in its delineation of the northern limits of Canaan. It mentions the Mediterranean as the western border of the land without taking cognizance of the Philistine regions along the southern coast, or of the northern coastal areas listed as parts of the remaining land in Joshua 13:1–6, Judges 3:1–3. Historically, neither Judah nor the northern Israelite kingdom ever controlled Mediterranean ports for very long, although recent excavations at Dor indicate that it was used during the reign of David as an Israelite port (Stern 1995).

It seems that Numbers 34 projects a vision of Canaan that mirrors the Egyptian province of Canaan (or the sphere of Egyptian hegemony), after the Battle of Kedesh on the Orontes ca. 1270 B.C.E. It was then that Egypt lost Amurru to the Hittites, retaining Upi (the region of Damascus) and Canaan (Schmitz 1992, in *ABD* I:828–831; Pitard 1992, in *ABD* II:5–7). This projection would explain why the author of Numbers 34 reached out to bring in Riblah, the site of the standoff between the two powers, if, indeed, the historical Riblah is being referred to in Numbers 34. As such, Numbers 34 would be refracting a vision of Canaan that would have been realistic before the invasions of the Sea Peoples, but after the Egyptian defeat. Of course, David had subjugated large regions of Aram in his day, including Aram Damascus (2 Samuel 8, 10) which might be relevant to the vision of a larger Land of Israel.

So, we are confronted with a fascinating but somewhat ironic literary-historical situation: In a relatively late period, by most indications after the restoration from Babylonian Exile, priestly writers were informed by a vision of the Promised Land that included all of Egyptian-dominated Canaan, as it was just before the beginning of the Iron Age. These priests, under the strong influence of the Deuteronomist, utilized that typology to make a statement: The God of Israel had granted to the Israelites entering Canaan (at about that very time) all of Canaan, meaning that the Israelites were the legitimate successors of the Egyptians. A similar notion probably underlies the transparently late interpolation in 1 Kings 5:4, which says of Solomon the magnificent: "For he exercised rule over all of *'Eber Hannahar,* from Tiphsah to Gaza, over all the kings of *ʿĒbēr Hannāhār.*" Hebrew *ʿĒber Hannāhār* (Jos 24:2) is a back translation of Aramaic *ʿAbār Naharāh* (= Assyrian *eber nāri*), the Persian satrapy of "Beyond the River [Euphrates]" (Ezra 4:10–11, 17, 20, and so forth), a designation frequent in Aramaic sources of the Achaemenid Period (Hoftijzer-Jongeling 1995:823, s.v. *ʿbr*$_5$).

Can it be that the restored Judean community found special meaning in the notion that the God of Israel had granted his people all of greater Canaan as it was delimited under Egyptian hegemony? Did it support their persistent and often successful efforts to extend their areas of control and strengthen their political status within the satrapy of *ʿAbār Naharāh*?

COMMENT 2: THE ISRAELITE TRIBES AND THEIR SUCCESSIVE CHIEFTAINS

Numbers 34:16–29 list the tribal chieftains who were to assist Eleazar, the priest, and Joshua, son of Nun, in apportioning the land to the Israelite people. This is the last of several similar lists preserved in Numbers, and it would be instructive to compare and contrast the various lists. Several factors come into play in the formulation of these tribal lists. All lists in Numbers exclude the Levites, who were considered to be a tribe apart. This special status was actually introduced and highlighted by Numbers (see the Comments to Num 8; Levine 1993:279–290). Most of the lists register one *nāśîʾ* "chieftain" as representing each tribe, with different personages often identified in this role for the relevant tribe. The priestly configuration of the Israelites conceived the leadership of the people to be shared between a chief priest and another kind of leader, divinely chosen. In the first round of lists, Moses and Aaron shared leadership of the tribal confederation. After the death of Aaron, an event recorded in Numbers 20:22–29, his place was taken by Eleazar, his son. In this, the final list, Joshua, son of Nun, is projected as the leader who will bring the Israelites into their land, a position he assumed in Numbers 27:15–23. The final list of Numbers 34:16–29 takes account of the granting of territories in Transjordan to the tribes of Reuben and Gad, a process recorded in Numbers 32, and as a result, lists only ten tribes as receiving territory in Cisjordan. Curiously, it does not take note of the fact that half of the tribe of Manasseh held territory in Transjordan, as documented in Numbers 32 (see the Comments to Num 32).

All in all, Numbers preserves seven tribal lists, variously composed, and to be found in Numbers 1, 2, 7, 10, 13, 26, and 34, respectively. Detailed information has been provided in Notes and Comments to these chapters. Although the order in which the tribes are listed usually varies in some detail, these lists are generally of two types: They either begin by listing Reuben as the firstborn (Numbers 1, 13, 26), or they list Judah first (Numbers 2, 7, 10, 34). Each convention has its literary antecedents, and it is uncertain as to how much significance should be attributed to this difference between them. The only possible clue to geographic distribution or political affiliation is in the present list of Numbers 34, where Judah is followed by Simeon, and from which the Transjordanian tribes of Reuben and Gad have been excluded. The Reubenite convention clearly reflects the genealogical traditions of Genesis and Exodus (Wilson 1992, in *ABD* II:929–932), whereas one could argue that listing Judah at the head represents a conscious rejection of those traditions by an author or compiler who favored Judah, and all that it represented, for political and historical reasons.

Note that in 1 Chronicles 2, the traditional genealogical list of tribes beginning with Reuben is dutifully presented at the start (1 Chron 2:1), but that immediately following, the detailed generational listings begin with Judah, a focus of prime concern to the Chronicler (1 Chron 2:2–4:23). This, in turn, is followed by the genealogy of Simeon, and the record then continues through 1 Chronicles 9, in an occasionally duplicative fashion, to encompass all of the tribes, including Levi, another subject of great interest to the Chronicler. One could say, therefore, that Numbers 34 correlates with 1 Chronicles 2–4, and following, in that both sources attest the sequence: Judah > Simeon, rather than Reuben > Simeon. This may reflect the realities of the period of the Second Temple; more precisely, the primacy of the restored Judean community, a theme that dominates the Books of Chronicles. In a broader sense, the initial position of Judah reflects the great importance attached to David by the Chronicler and his endorsement of the centrality of the Temple of Jerusalem.

Some further observations are in order: The personages named as chieftains follow a specific pattern in which the organizing principle is the priestly chronology. Thus, Numbers 1, 2, 7 and 10 all name the same chieftains. This is because, notwithstanding differences in the sequence of the tribes and in literary function, all of these texts are set in the initial phase of the Wilderness Period. The first census (Numbers 1) and the marching order (Numbers 2 and 10), as well as the dedication of the Tabernacle (Numbers 7) all occurred at the beginning of the Wilderness Period. (As a further detail, Numbers 2, 7, and 10 all list the tribes in the same order, and have clearly been correlated.)

However, according to the priestly chronology (as differentiated from the chronology of JE), the Israelites did not arrive at Kadesh Barnea until the thirty-ninth year, a matter explained in the Introduction to Numbers (Levine 1993:52–57). Numbers 26 contains no named chieftains, but in the brief time projected in the priestly chronology between Numbers 13 and Numbers 34, Joshua had become Moses' replacement, and Caleb survived as the only chieftain listed in Numbers 13 who will participate in apportioning the land. All of the rest of the chieftains named in Numbers 34 are new. It is evident, therefore, that the tribal lists have been, for the most part, coordinated by the compiler of Numbers so as to reflect the priestly version of events. The tribal list of Numbers 34 derives from a different priestly source from that of Numbers 13. It is, first of all, a Judahite list, and it has a new list of tribal chieftains notwithstanding the fact that in the priestly chronology it would be virtually coterminous with Numbers 13, namely, near the beginning of the Wilderness Period.

PART XII.

NUMBERS 35: LAWS OF HOMICIDE AND ASYLUM

◆

INTRODUCTION

Numbers 35 is a priestly document dealing with two related subjects: the designation of forty-eight Levitical towns, of which six are to serve as towns of asylum (*ʿārê miqlāṭ*), and a code of law governing all forms of homicide. Both of these themes have broad social, religious and economic implications for our understanding of biblical society. In particular, Numbers 35 provides significant information on the subject of biblical criminal law, and reflects an identifiable phase in its development. These themes will be explored in the Comments to Numbers 35. The specific contents of Numbers 35 may be outlined as follows:

1) Numbers 35:1–8: Levitical towns and towns of asylum. The Levites, who will possess no estate in the Land of Canaan like the other Israelite tribes, are to reside in a total of forty-eight towns, including the six designated towns of asylum (cf. Deut 4:41–44, 19:1–10). The placement of this network of safe havens testifies to the relationship between cult centers and places of asylum, more specifically reflecting the fact that the right of asylum is a function of the sanctity of cult sites, with their altars and sacred space. One who is in the presence of God is under his protection. It is on this basis that the towns of asylum were put under the management of the Levites, and were specified as some of their towns.

   To secure a total of forty-eight towns, the other tribes of Israel were to allocate some of their towns to the Levites, on a proportional scale. The Levitical towns were to be constructed according to a fixed plan. The towns themselves were to be two thousand cubits square, standing at the center of an extended urban area reaching outside of the town wall one thousand cubits in all four directions (Figure 2). This outer perimeter of one thousand cubits was classified as *migrasim* "town plots" for pasturing animals and for gardening. The total area of the town, including its extramural *migrāšîm*, would thus be four thousand cubits square.
2) Numbers 35:9–29: Reference to the six towns of asylum introduces a code of law governing homicide. In some of its provisions, this legal system directly involves the functions of the towns of asylum, but it is, as a whole, much more comprehensive. The law distinguishes in a fairly simplistic way between premeditated murder and all other forms of homicide, focusing primarily on the inadvertent or accidental taking of a human life as opposed to premeditated murder, leaving substantial gray areas in between. It establishes a strict standard for premeditated murder, and strict rules applying to this category. There can be no ran-

som for a convicted premeditating murderer, who must be executed. "The restorer of the blood" (Hebrew: *gō'ēl haddām*), a clan relative of the slain person bent on retaliation, was accorded the right to put such a convicted offender to death if he found him. But one taking the life of another without malice aforethought, or who claimed as much, could receive asylum through flight from the *gō'ēl* into any of the six designated towns until his case could be disposed of through the judicial process, and a determination reached as to the severity of his crime. If the fugitive is adjudged to be an inadvertent homicide, and is accordingly granted asylum, he must remain in detention until the death of the incumbent High Priest, when an amnesty would be granted. If he left the jurisdiction of the town of asylum under any other circumstances, he would be fair game for the *gō'ēl*.

3) Numbers 35:30–34: The chapter concludes with a brief code of law, which was probably appended, or possibly adapted from another source, setting forth rules of testimony to apply in capital cases. A murderer may be executed only on the independent testimony of two witnesses, one witness being insufficient to convict. There is no ransoming a murderer; he must pay with his life. Furthermore, a manslayer may not buy himself out of detention in the town of asylum; he must remain there until the death of the incumbent High Priest. These provisions, we are told, were intended to assure that the Promised Land would not be defiled by unrequited blood. In more realistic terms, the granting of asylum was intended to restrict retaliation through clan initiative, and to bring all crimes under the control of a proper judiciary.

TRANSLATION

35 [1]YHWH addressed Moses in the Plains of Moab, across the Jordan from Jericho, as follows:

[2]Issue a command to the Israelite people to allocate to the Levites, from the apportioned estate acquired by them, towns to reside in, and you shall allocate to the Levites, as well, town plots in their environs.

[3]The towns shall serve them for settlement, and the plots shall be for their cattle and possessions, and all of their livestock.

[4]The urban plots that you shall allocate to the Levites: From the town wall and outside [they shall extend] one thousand cubits, all around.

[5]You shall measure off, outside of the town, two thousands cubits as the eastern limit, and two thousand cubits as the southern limit, and two thousand cubits as the western limit, and two thousand cubits as the northern limit, with the town at the center. Such shall be your town plots.

[6]The towns that you shall allocate to the Levites: The six towns of asylum that you will allocate [as places] where the [accused] murderer may flee; and in addition to them, you shall allocate forty-two towns.

[7]Total of towns which you shall allocate to the Levites: forty-eight towns, them and their urban plots.

[8]The towns that you shall allocate from the acquired estate of the Israelite people: From the numerous you shall allocate many, and from the sparse you shall allocate few; each [tribe], commensurate with the estate which he is to receive, shall he allocate of his towns to the Levites.

[9]YHWH addressed Moses as follows:

[10]Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: You are now crossing the Jordan into the Land of Canaan.

[11]You shall make accessible to yourselves towns which will serve you as towns of asylum, where an [accused] murderer may flee, one who slays a human being inadvertently.

[12]These towns shall serve you as places of asylum from a restorer, so that the [accused] murderer will not meet death until he stands before the communal assembly for judgment.

[13]The towns you shall allocate: You shall have six towns of asylum.

[14]Three of the towns you shall allocate on the other side of the Jordan, and the other three towns in the Land of Canaan. They shall serve as towns of asylum.

[15]These six towns shall serve as asylum for the Israelite people and for the resident alien sojourning in their midst, [as places] where anyone who inadvertently slays a human being may flee.

[16]But if one struck another with an iron implement so that he died, he is, indeed, a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death.

[17]Or if one struck another with a deadly stone hand [tool] so that he died from it, he is, indeed, a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death.

[18]Or if he struck him with a deadly wooden hand implement so that he died, he is, indeed, a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death.

[19]The restorer of the blood, he, himself, shall execute the murderer; he shall execute him upon encountering him.

[20]Or if one knocked another down in passionate hatred, or hurled something at him with prior intent so that he died;

[21]or if one struck another with his hand in enmity so that died, the slayer shall be put to death, for he is a murderer; the avenger of the blood, himself, shall execute the murderer upon encountering him.

[22]If, however, one knocked another down suddenly, without enmity, or threw any sort of tool at him without prior intent;

[23]or let fall on him any deadly stone without noticing, so that he died—in a case where one was not the other's enemy, or seeking to do him harm—

[24]the communal assembly shall adjudicate between the slayer and the restorer of the blood according to the [above] legal norms.

[25]The communal assembly shall rescue the homicide from the hand of the restorer of the blood; the communal assembly shall bring him back to the town of asylum where he had fled, and he shall reside there until the death of the High Priest who had been anointed with the sacred oil.

[26]Should the [accused] murderer ever depart the boundary of his town of asylum where he had fled,

[27]and the restorer of the blood overtake him outside the border of his town of asylum, and the restorer of the blood murder the [accused] murderer, he is not to be charged with a capital crime.

[28]For he (= the [accused] murderer) must reside in his town of asylum until the death of the High Priest; only after the death of the High Priest may the [accused] murderer return to the district of his acquired estate.

[29]These shall serve you as a judicial statute throughout your generations, in all of your settlements.

[30]When a person slays a human being, the murderer may be executed only on the testimony of witnesses. A single witness may not testify against a human being liable [to the sentence] of death.

[31]You may not accept ransom for the life of a murderer who has been condemned to death; he must surely be put to death.

[32]Nor may you accept ransom in lieu of flight to one's town of asylum, [allowing one] to reside in the land prior to the death of the Priest.

[33]You must not desecrate the land where you reside, for bloodshed desecrates the land, and the land will not be granted expiation for the blood that has been shed in it except through the blood of him who sheds it.

[34]You must not defile the land wherein you reside, in whose midst I [also] maintain a residence; for I, YHWH, maintain a residence among the Israelite people.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 35:1–8: A NETWORK OF LEVITICAL TOWNS DESIGNATED AS SAFE HAVENS

1. *in the Plains of Moab, across the Jordan from Jericho.* As presented, the provisions of Numbers 35 are among those communicated to Moses just before the Israelites crossed the Jordan, so that the people would know how to govern themselves in the Promised Land.

2. On the formula *ṣaw ʾet benê Yiśrāʾēl* "Issue a command to the Israelite people," see Notes to Numbers 34:2. The Israelites were ordered to allocate to

the Levites towns from their territories, which were to be apportioned to them according to the provisions of Numbers 34. Actually, it is in Numbers 26:52–56 that we first read of the distribution of the land to the tribes, a theme subsequently resumed in Numbers 34. It is this theme that accounts for the sequence of chapters 34 and 35: Numbers first provides instructions for the apportionment of the land, and then the matter of Levitical towns, and the towns of asylum is taken up.

from the apportioned estate acquired by them

The composite term *naḥalat ʾaḥuzzātām,* translated "the apportioned estate acquired by them," combines two discrete theories of land tenure in biblical Israel, that of *naḥalāh* "received, inherited estates," and that of *ʾaḥuzzāh* "acquired land," and treats the two terms as though they were synonymous. We first encounter a similar composite, *ʾaḥuzzat naḥalāh* "the acquired estate that is apportioned," in Numbers 27:7 (see Notes to Num 26:53, 27:4–7). It was typical of certain priestly writers to combine terms in this way, thereby harmonizing differing, and often successive traditions. Cf. Ezekiel 46:16: *ʾaḥuzzātām hîʾ benaḥalāh* "It is their acquired land by apportionment."

towns to reside in

The Hebrew word *ʿîr,* plural *ʿārîm,* has no evident etymology. A frequent synonym is *qiryāh* "town" (Deut 2:36, 3:4, Isa 1:21, 26), and the less frequent form *qeret* (Prov 8:3, 9:3). Most likely, *qiryāh* designates a fair-sized walled town, at times situated high in the mountains (see further). The translation "town" for Hebrew *ʿîr* is preferable to "city," for which there is no corresponding biblical Hebrew term. The closest we come to a term for "city" in biblical Hebrew is in derivatives of the verb *y-š-b* "to dwell, reside," such as *môšāb,* "settlement," which functionally connotes "city" in the priestly literature of the Torah (Exod 12:20, Lev 3:17, and below, in Num 35:29), and in Ezekiel and Chronicles. Also note the term *ʿîr môšāb* "urban settlement" in Psalm 107:4.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (s.v. "city" and "town") demonstrates that classical terms for cities and towns either express, in the first instance, the notion of community, or convey the sense of place, of a constructed physical complex. English "city" derives from Latin *civitas* and perceives the city in terms of its citizenry and community, whereas Latin *urbs,* from which the English adjective "urban" derives, connotes the physical plant and situation of the city. Old German and Saxon cognates of "town" designate castles, fenced enclosures and walled enclaves. So, notwithstanding considerable semantic shifts from the structural to the human, as is true of the Greek term *polis,* Hebrew *ʿîr* clearly belongs with terminology designating the physical entity, and is best translated "town." The same would be true of the most frequent synonyms of Hebrew *ʿîr,* namely, *qiryāh* and *qeret,* which derive from the verb *q-r-h* "to roof, place beams" (Neh 2:8, 3:3, 6), cf. the noun *qōrāh* "beam" (Song of Songs 1:17; Levine 1998:117–143).

In the construction *ʿārîm lāšābet*, the form *(lā)šebet* may represent either the infinitive construct with *lamed* preformative, or a noun meaning "settlement" as in: *lešebet ʿĀr* "to the settlement of Ar" (see Notes to Num 21:15). The towns envisioned were to own extramural *migrāšîm* "town plots," extending on all sides. The construction *migrāš leʿārîm* literally means "a plot belonging to the towns." The term *migrāš*, presumably derived from the verb *gāraš* "to drive, corral," originally connoted a grazing area for livestock, as the next verse, Numbers 35:3, indicates, and would have been an alternate way of saying *gidrōt ṣōʾn* "sheepfolds" (Num 32:16). It is likely, however, that these plots also served for gardening of various sorts, and that reference to pastoral utilization is a reflection of the desert milieu projected in priestly law and historiography (see Levine 1989b:177, s.v. Lev 25:34). Technically, we should have the feminine plural suffix, *sebîbōtêhen* "in their environs," the antecedent being the feminine plural *ʿārîm* "towns," but imprecision of this sort occasionally occurs.

3. *for their cattle and possessions.* Hebrew *rekūš* is a general collective term for possessions. In a projected pastoral economy, wealth would consist primarily of animals of various sorts, whereas in other contexts Hebrew *rekūš* may connote different sorts of wealth. It may represent an alternate form of *rekes* "horses, cavalry" (cf. 1 Kings 5:8, Micah 1:13). The Hebrew term *ḥayyāh* is a collective meaning "beasts." Cf. the wording of the present verse with that of Leviticus 25:7: "and to your livestock and to the beasts (*welaḥayyāh*) that are in your land." Reference is most likely to beasts of burden, such as mules. Repeatedly in Numbers 35, idiomatic *hāyāh l-* means "to serve as" (see below, in Num 35:5, 11–15).

4–5. *The urban plots.* Literally: "the town plots of the towns." The description is clear regarding the measurements of the *migrāšîm* "town plots" themselves. They are to extend beyond the town wall one thousand cubits in all directions. When Numbers 35:5 prescribes that two thousand cubits be measured off in all four directions *miḥûṣ lāʿîr* "outside of the town," we are to understand that the *migrāšîm* were to be measured off in all four directions two thousand cubits to an outer limit. This means that the walled town is projected as two thousand cubits square, whereas the entire jurisdiction of the town would be four thousand cubits square. In other words, two thousand cubits were to be measured from a central point within the towns in very direction. Here, the orientation is east, south, west, north, but other sequences of directions are also in evidence. On this subject, and regarding the terms for the four directions and usage of the designation *pēʾāh* "limit" in boundary descriptions, see Notes to Numbers 34:3–12. The Hebrew *wehāʿîr battāwek* is best taken to mean "with the town at the center."

6. *The six towns of asylum.* We encounter for the first time in Torah literature the significant term *ʿārê hammiqlāṭ* "the towns of asylum." Biblical usage of the verb *q-l-ṭ* "to draw in, take in, absorb" is virtually limited to the form

miqlāṭ, with locative *mem*, and to the context of asylum (see below, in Num 35:11–15, 25–28, 32, and Jos 20:2–3, 21:13, passim; 1 Chron 6:42, 52). Variant forms are attested in postbiblical Hebrew and Jewish-Aramaic (Levy 1963, IV: 308–310). In Joshua 20:4, in a subsequent law governing asylum, the verb *ʼ-s-p* "to gather in, take in" is used in place of *q-l-ṭ*: "And they shall gather him (*we ʼāsepû ʼōtō*) into the town, into their midst, and they shall provide him with a place, so that he may dwell among them." In practical terms, asylum meant that one would be accepted, allowed to enter a zone of protection. As will be noted below (in Notes to Num 35:11, 15), usage of the term *rōṣēaḥ* "murderer" is imprecise, so that it is preferable to render it "[accused] murderer" (or "homicide"), except when reference is specifically to one who is deemed to have committed premeditated murder.

This verse seems to anticipate what will be stated further in Numbers 35:11–15 on the subject of the towns of asylum, and assumes that the reader knows that there were to be six of them. This suggests, in turn, that Numbers 35:1–8 were later added to the essential law code of Numbers 35:9–29. The development of the institution of asylum, and its significance, will be traced in the Comments to Numbers 35.

where the [accused] murderer may flee

The key verb employed in laws governing asylum is *n-w-s* "to flee," which appears in virtually all biblical statements on this subject (see below, in Num 35:11, 15, 25–26, 32, and cf. Exod 21:13, Deut 4:42, 19:3–5, 11, Jos 20, 1 Kings 2:28–29). This verb expresses the *Leitmotif* of flight from retaliation. Prepositional *waʻalêhem* "and in addition to them" reflects the mathematical vocabulary. Cf. Deuteronomy 13:1: "You may not add to it (*lōʼ tōsēp ʻālāw*), nor may you subtract from it."

7. *Total of towns.* Use of the particle *kol* "total" is well attested in lists and records, as is explained in Notes to Numbers 7:84–88; Levine 1993:258.

8. *From the numerous you shall allocate many.* The cognate formula *mēʼēt hārab tarbû* "from the numerous you shall allocate many," and its converse, *mēʼēt hammeʻaṭ tam ʻîṭû* "from the sparse you shall allocate few," first occur in Numbers 26:54, and then recur in Numbers 33:54, all in the context of the apportionment of Canaan to the tribes. Formulaic *ʼîš kepî* "each according to" is typical of priestly style. Thus, Exodus 16:21: "Each according to his consumption (*ʼîš kepî ʼoklô*)," and cf. Numbers 6:21, 7:50.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 35:9–29: LAWS OF HOMICIDE AND THE RIGHT OF ASYLUM

9–10. *You are now crossing the Jordan.* On the force of *kî* "now," cf. Numbers 33:51, 34:1. The construction *ʼarṣāh Kenāʻan* "to the land of Canaan," with the locative accusative, is frequent in the patriarchal narratives of Genesis (Gen 11:31, 12:5, 31:18, 42:29, 45:17, 50:13).

11. *You shall make accessible to yourselves.* The Hiphil *hiqrāh* elsewhere connotes a chance occurrence, or one unanticipated (Gen 24:12, 27:20). This corresponds to the usual sense of the verb *q-r-h,* whereas here it would have intentional force. More to the point, this verbal root expresses a spatial connotation involving appearance or access. Thus, Genesis 24:12, where Abraham's steward, Eliezer, in search of a proper bride for his master's son, Isaac, asks God: "YHWH, God of my master, Abraham, make [it] appear, I beseech you (*haqrēh nā'*) before me." Also, Genesis 27:20, where Esau explains to Isaac, his father, that he returned from the hunt quickly—"for YHWH, your God made [it] appear (*hiqrāh*) before me." On this basis, present usage of *hiqrāh* should connote the sense of accessibility; the designation of towns located so as to provide access to fleeing homicides. Hence: *wehiqrîtem lākem* "you shall make accessible to yourselves."

one who slays a human being inadvertently.

Acts classified as *šegāgāh* "inadvertence" are explained in Notes to Numbers 15:22–25 (see Levine 1989b:19–20, s.v. Lev 4:2). The idiom *hikkāh nepeš* "to strike fatally" is a general way of characterizing homicide (below, in Num 35:15, 30). The text introduces a code of law governing unintentional homicide, which is to say, cases where it has not been established that the homicide was premeditated, so that it would be wrong to allow a clan relative of the slain person to retaliate without due process. Imprecisely, the killer is here (and in the following verse) termed *rōṣēaḥ,* usually understood as "murderer," even though premeditation has not been established. Note that in Numbers 35:15, just below, the term *rōṣēaḥ* does not appear in a parallel formulation of the law (see above, in Notes to Num 35:6). Hence, the translation: "[accused] murderer."

12. *as places of asylum from a restorer.* Hebrew *gō'ēl* " restorer, avenger" is abbreviated from *gō'ēl haddām* "restorer of the blood" (as occurs below, in Num 35:19, 21, 25, 27). This is a way of referring to a clan member who undertakes to retaliate against one accused of murdering his relative. The "blood" referred to is the blood of the slain relative. The Hebrew verb *g-'-l* has many connotations, not limited to retaliation. Its essential sense seems to be that of restoring what had been taken away or lost. The unrequited blood of the slain cries out from the earth, as did the blood of Abel (Gen 4:10), demanding the blood or life of the murderer in retribution. The *gō'ēl* seeks to accomplish this through retaliation. The phenomenology of clan-based blood retaliation, which represents a major theme in biblical literature, will be explored in the Comments.

until he stands before the communal assembly for judgment.

One accused of murder ought not to be punished before "standing trial" (Hebrew *'āmad lemišpāṭ*) before the communal assembly, the *'ēdāh.* Like Hebrew *qāhāl,* the term *ʿēdāh* expresses the notion of assembling or bringing people together, and is to be rendered "community" when it refers to the entire Israelite people, or to one of its constituent communities. Note the determined form *hāʿēdāh* "the community" (Lev 8:3, Num 10:3, and see Notes to Num 1:16; Levine 1993:138; also cf. Prov 5:14). It is the term distinctive of the priestly school. But, like many social and political terms of reference, Hebrew *ʿēdāh* may also refer to an assembly representing, or acting on behalf of the community, and this is the proper sense here. The role of tribal and local assemblies will be explored further in the Comments, as will the corollary question of where the projected trial was to take place (see below, in Notes to Num 35:25).

13–15. *on the other side of the Jordan.* Six towns are to be allocated by the Israelites as towns of asylum, three on each side of the Jordan. Note that a contrast is drawn between *mē ʿēber layyardēn* "on the other side of the Jordan," namely, in Transjordan, and *beʾereṣ Kenāʿan* "in the Land of Canaan." This indicates that in the view of this priestly author Transjordan lay outside of Canaan proper. The resident alien (*gēr [we]tôšāb*) was also to have access to the towns of asylum, like the Israelite. Similarly inclusive provisions aimed at protecting resident aliens also occur in Leviticus 19:33–34, 25:6, 35 (Levine 1989b:134, s.v. Lev 19:33, and see Notes to Num 15:14–15; Levine 1993:393). The construction *welaggēr wellātôšāb* is to be taken as hendiadys and is accordingly translated "and for the resident alien."

16–18. *But if one struck another.* The code of law now proceeds to define premeditated murder. In its formulation, it resonates with the statement of law on murder in Deuteronomy 19:1–10. The literary-historical relationship between Numbers 35 and Deuteronomy 19:1–10 will be elucidated in the Comments, as will other inner-biblical relationships relevant to the law of homicide. Here, three hypothetical cases are projected, all involving the use of a deadly instrument, usually a weapon, in the homicidal act. In each instance, the murderer struck the victim with an instrument of iron, stone or wood. Listed are characteristic examples of deadly objects, literally "by which one dies" (*ʾašer yāmût bāh*), in the words of Numbers 35:17: an iron sword, a stone implement, a wooden club or the like.

Against the background of Numbers 35:11 and 15, above, it is to be understood that here, the verb *hikkāh* "to strike" implies an intentional act, in contradistinction to the various circumstances described further on, in Numbers 35:22–23, where the law will speak of heaving or hurling an object. On this basis, a direct fatal blow with a deadly weapon is adjudged to be an act of premeditated murder. Whereas *keli barzel* "an iron implement" bears a clear meaning, *ʾeben yād,* literally "hand stone," is less precise. Reference is undoubtedly to a tool or weapon held in the hand, like the more fully descriptive term *kelî ʿēṣ yād* "a wooden hand implement."

he is, indeed, a murderer

Emphatic *rōṣēaḥ hûʾ* "He is, indeed, a murderer" precisely defines the crime. Prior to this point, the characterization *roseah* has been used less precisely to mean "homicide, [accused] murderer" (see Notes to Num 35:6, above). Use of the Hophal *yûmāt* "he shall be put to death" connotes execution by human hands (see Notes to Num 1:51; Levine 1993:141).

19. *The restorer of the blood, he, himself, shall execute the murderer.* If premeditation is proved in court, on the testimony of witnesses, as stipulated below in Numbers 35:30, the restorer of the blood is accorded the right to execute the murderer upon encountering him. The verb *p-g-ʿ* often describes accidental encounters (Exod 23:4, 1 Sam 10:5). Especially suggestive in describing the graphics of flight is Amos 5:19: "Just as a person flees from the lion and then the bear encounters him (*upegāʿô haddōb*)!" The restorer may also take the law into his hands in the event the homicide departs the limits of the town of asylum prior to the proclamation of amnesty at the death of the incumbent High Priest (see below, in Num 35:27).

20–21. *Or if one knocked another down.* The code of law now turns to an act of homicide that may not have involved use of a weapon, but was, nevertheless, premeditated. The key words are *śin'āh* "passionate hatred," *'êbāh* "enmity" and *sediyyāh* "prior intent." It is difficult to fathom what each of these terms connotes in legal terms, but an analysis of usage can approximate legal usage. In fact, the critera set forth in Numbers 35:22–23, just below, in the provisions aimed at sparing the unintentional homicide, imply by contrast the criteria for a conviction on the charge of premeditated murder. Thus, Numbers 35:23 virtually defines *śin 'āh* by negative implication: *wehûʾ lōʾ 'ôyēb lô welōʾ mebaqqēš rāʿātô* "in cases where one was not the other's enemy, nor seeking to do him harm." In other words, *śin'ah* exists, in legal terms, if the perpetrator is known to have had it in for the victim. In a similar way, we may infer what the Hebrew *'êbāh* means from the statement in Numbers 35:22: *we'im bepetʿa belō 'êbāh* "but if suddenly, without enmity," implying that *'ebah* is thought to exist where there was some advance demonstration of aggressive behavior. Finally, the actuality of *sediyyāh* "prior intent" may be negatively implied by Numbers 35:23: *belōʾ re'ôt* "without seeing, noticing," which represents the reverse situation. Etymologically, *'êbāh* "enmity" is related to *'ôyēb* "foe, enemy."

with prior intent

The derivation of *ṣediyyāh* is less clear, however. Either *ṣ-d-h* is related to *ṣ-w-d* "to hunt," and refers to stalking or lying in ambush with intent to kill; or, as is more likely, it represents a phonetic variant of *z-w-d* or *z-d-h* "to act with malice, to plot." Thus, Exodus 21:14: "When a person plots against another (*wekî yāzîd 'îš ʿal rēʿēhû*) to kill him." The latter derivation is reflected in the translation. The verb *h-d-p* "to shove, knock down" expresses violence. Thus, Jeremiah 46:15: *lōʾ ʿāmad kî YHWH hadāpô* "He could not stand, because YHWH had knocked him down." It is parallel with *h-r-s* "to ruin, tear down" (Isa 22:19), and can be said of repelling enemies (Deut 6:19, 9:4).

22–23. *If, however, one knocked another down suddenly.* Here we are provided with a comprehensive definition of inadvertence. Inadvertence is said to exist in cases where one shoved another, and the shove was sudden and without enmity; or when an object was hurled, or cast upon the victim without malice or attentiveness (literally: without "seeing"), and with no apparent intention of killing or doing harm. The Hebrew *wayyappēl ʿālāw* means "he let fall upon him," and seems to suggest the suddenness of the act. In describing the destruction of Jerusalem, the prophet Jeremiah (15:8) warns: "I let fall upon her suddenly (*hippaltî ʿalêhā pitʾōm*) alarm and terror."

24. *the communal assembly shall adjudicate.* The communal assembly was to adjudicate between the homicide, here referred to as *hammakkeh* "the slayer," and the restorer of the blood, and to arrive at a determination as to whether premeditated murder or manslaughter had been committed. This is the juridical force of the Hebrew *šāpaṭ bên* "to adjudicate between" (cf. Exod 18:16, 1 Sam 24:16, and see above, in Notes to Num 35:12). The Hebrew *ʿal hammišpāṭîm hāʾēleh* has the same force as would *ʿal pî hammišpāṭîm hā ʾēleh* "according to these [= the above] legal norms." This refers to the above stated criteria used to determine the severity of the crime. The Hebrew term *mišpāṭ*, which has many connotations, here refers to the legal norms, principles and procedures that govern the judicial process. Thus, Exodus 21:1: "And the following are the legal norms (*weʾēleh hammišpāṭîm*) that you shall set before them." The text of Exodus 21–23 then proceeds to outline the proper disposition of various sorts of cases.

25. *The communal assembly shall rescue the homicide.* What normally occurred was as follows: The homicide would gain access to the town of asylum and then be brought to trial, presumably after which one would either be executed or returned to the town of asylum. It is not clear from this statement, or from later statements in Joshua 20:1–6, where the trial was to take place, but it is clear that it was not to be held in the perpetrator's hometown, or on one's own family estate. It remains unclear as to whether the trial would take place in the town of asylum or elsewhere. The question of judicial venue will be discussed in the Comments to Numbers 35, where it will be argued that such trials were to take place in the central or federal court whose establishment is ordained in Deuteronomy 17:8–13.

The verb *hiṣṣîl*, from the root *n-ṣ-l*, has an essentially spatial connotation, bearing the sense of removing or extricating someone from a place of danger or distress, hence of rescuing, saving. Thus, the *ʿēdāh* will rescue the offender "from the hand of (*miyyad*) the restorer of the blood" (cf. 2 Kings 18:35, Jer 14:2, Ezek 13:21, 23, 34:12). Particularly graphic is usage in 2 Samuel 14:6: "Your servant woman has two sons; the two of them fought in the open field, *but there was no one to pull them apart from each other* (*weʾên maṣṣîl bênêhem*)."

and he shall reside there until the death of the High Priest

The homicide who has been exonerated of premeditated murder must remain in the town of asylum until the death of the incumbent High Priest (*hakkōhēn haggāaōl*), at which time an amnesty would be proclaimed, and that person would be free to depart. This is the realistic import of the present provision of law, which correlates with Leviticus 8:12 and Leviticus 21:10 in singling out Aaron, the High Priest, as one anointed with the sacred oil of unction, whose recipe is prescribed in Exodus 30:24–33. The construction *šemen haqqōdeš* "the sacred oil" is unique to this verse, and probably represents an abbreviation of the fuller term *šemen mišḥat qōdeš* "the sacred oil of unction" (Exod 30:25–31). The most frequent term is simply *šemen hammišḥāh* "the oil of unction" (Exod 25:6, 29:7, Num 4:16). The Hebrew *ʾašer māšaḥ ʾotô* is elliptical and is translated as a passive: "who had been anointed."

26–28. *Should the [accused] murderer ever depart the boundary of his town of asylum.* Should the homicide exit the boundary (Hebrew *gebûl*) of the town of asylum and the restorer of the blood overtake him outside the town of asylum, he may retaliate against him with impunity. Here, the force of the verb *m-ṣ-ʾ* is not simply to locate or find, but rather "to overtake," which may be closer to its essential connotation (cf. similar nuances in Deut 4:30, 1 Kings 21:20). Only after the death of the incumbent High Priest may the homicide return to "the *district* of his acquired estate (*ʾel ʾereṣ ʾaḥuzzātô*)." The sense of "district, region" for Hebrew *ʾereṣ* "land, country" is discussed in Notes to Numbers 32:1. Such usage implies that the Land of Israel was divided into districts, of which more in the Comments.

29. *These shall serve you as a judicial statute.* It is unclear whether *ʾēleh* "these" refers to what precedes, as was the case in Numbers 35:24, above, or whether it refers to what follows, as is often the case elsewhere. Most likely, the final verses of the chapter (Num 35:30–34) were appended from another code of law, and if so, *ʾēleh* in the present verse brings to closure what has already been stated. Once again, the idiom *hāyāh l-* means "to serve as." The above laws constitute "a judicial statute" (*ḥūqqat mišpāṭ*) for all time (see Notes to Num 27:11). Ordaining statutes for all generations, to be operative in all Israelite settlements, is a characteristic formulation in priestly law (see Notes to Num 15:15, and cf. Lev 3:17, 23:3, 14, 21, 31).

NOTES TO NUMBERS 35:30–34: POSTULATES OF THE BIBLICAL JUDICIAL SYSTEM

30. *When a person slays a human being.* The concluding verses (Num 35:30–34) were undoubtedly appended or adapted from some other code of

law. In part, formulation here echoes earlier statements of law in Exodus 21:12–13 and Deuteronomy 19:1–13. These inner-biblical relationships will be discussed in the Comments. The designation *makkēh nepeš* "one who strikes fatally" is explained above in Notes to Numbers 35:11 (cf. Deut 19:6). The elliptical formulation *yirṣaḥ 'et harōṣēaḥ* is to be understood as passive: "the murderer may be executed." The poignant cognate-accusative syntax, *rāṣaḥ 'et hārōṣēaḥ* "to murder the murderer," is unique in Scripture.

31–32. *You may not accept ransom for the life of a murderer.* One convicted of premeditated murder must pay with his life; ransom (Hebrew *kōper*) is not allowable. According to the Book of the Covenant (Exod 21:30), *kōper* is allowable, however, when death resulted from the act of one's ox, who gored another to death, not from one's own physical action, and accordingly the formulation is conditional: *we' im kōper yûšat ʿālāw* "if ransom is imposed upon him." The term *kōper* derives from the verb *k-p-r*, normally expressed by finite forms in the Piel stem *kippēr*, whose basic connotation is "to wipe off, clear, clean," hence "to expiate." A full discussion of this critical theme is in its cultic applications is provided in the monograph *In The Presence of the Lord* (Levine 1974:56–77). In its legal nuances, Hebrew *kōper* expresses the notion of substitution or exchange (Isa 43:2, Prov 21:18). This is indicated by the statement of Numbers 35:32 to the effect that one is prohibited from substituting a payment for one's prolonged detention in a town of asylum. On this basis, Hebrew *kōper* may also connote a bribe (1 Sam 12:3, Amos 12, Prov 6:35). In a symbolic vein, we are told that one cannot pay off God for his life when his time comes (Ps 49:8). Note added usage of the verb *kippēr* in Numbers 35:33, just below.

in lieu of flight to one's town of asylum

The wording of Numbers 35:32 is unusual, and we must supply a required nuance in the translation. Thus, *welō' tiqqeḥû kōper lānûs*, literally "You may not accept ransom to flee; for fleeing," is translated "in lieu of flight." To accept ransom in lieu of detention would allow the homicide "to resume residence, to reside once more" (*lāšûb lāšebet*) freely in the land, which is not permitted. This is often the sense of the verb *šûb* "to return" when it is in an auxiliary position with respect to the following verb. Cf. Deuteronomy 24:4: "He may not . . . again take her as wife (*lō' yûkal . . . lāšûb leqaḥtāh*). Also cf. Joshua 5:2: *wešûb mōl 'et benê Yiśrā'ēl šēnît* "And again circumcise the Israelites, for a second time."

33–34. *You must not desecrate the land where you reside.* Numbers 35 closes with an admonition: Unrequited blood will defile the land. The key verb is stative *ḥānēp* "to be impious, vile," Hiphil *heḥenîp* "to desecrate, defile, disgrace, render unfit." Cognate vocabulary occurs in EA no. 288, line 8: *ḫa-an-pa ša iḫ-nu-pu a-na mu-ḫi-ia* "It is, therefore, impious what they have done to me" (Moran 1992:331; CAD H:76, s.v. *ḫanāpu* A; HALAT:322, *s.v. ḥ-n-p* 1).

Also note the noun form *ḫannipu* "vileness" (CAD *Ḫ*:80, s.v. *ḫannipu*) in *EA*, no. 162, line 74; where a certain official is characterized as: *ša ḫa-an-ni-pa i-te-e-i-ú*. "one who is expert in sacrilege" (Moran 1992:250). The sense seems to be that of an unconscionable overstepping of moral behavior. Similar diction may be traced to Jeremiah 3:1–2: "If a man divorces his wife, and she leaves him and marries another man, can he ever go back to her? Would not such a land surely be defiled (*hallō' ḥānôp teḥenap hā'āreṣ hahî'*)? Now you have whored with many lovers: can you return to me? . . . And you defiled the land (*wattaḥanîpî 'ereṣ*) with your whoring and your debauchery" (cf. Jer 23:15 for the noun form *ḥanuppāh* "impiety, evildoing"). Adjectival *ḥānēp* is well attested in biblical wisdom literature as a characterization of evildoers (Isa 9:16, 10:6, Prov 11:9, Job 17:8).

The notion that the land and its inhabitants are linked to each other, so that human behavior defiles the land as well as the people, and leads to exile and loss of the land, is basic to several biblical sources. This is particularly significant with respect to the symbolism of blood as life, expressed in the context of the laws governing capital punishment. The land must be cleansed of the blood of the slain that flows into the earth. This is a passive reflex of the notion that the land demands retribution for the loss of life. But, "the land will not be granted expiation" (*welā'āreṣ lō' yekuppar*) unless murder is avenged by the shedding of the murderer's own blood. Idiomatic *šāpak dām* "to shed blood" figures prominently in priestly statements on life such as Genesis 9:6: *šōpēk dam hā'ādām, bā'ādām dāmô yiššāpēk* "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed." This pronouncement authorizes duly constituted courts to take the life of the premeditated murderer, to shed his blood.

The form *šuppak* as vocalized by the Masoretes with augmented second radical, would be a Pual form. However, this vocalization masks the internal Qal passive, which, in the perfect tense, would produce the form *šupak* "was spilled." As a matter of fact, the verb *š-p-k* is unattested in the Piel in biblical Hebrew. Prepositional *beth* in the phrase *bedam šōpekô* "by, through the blood of" is instrumental. Inattention to the punishment of murderers, allowing their crimes to go unrequited, contaminates the land as well as human society. God is not disposed to dwelling amidst impurity, and will abandon the land as a result. On the present sense of Hebrew *šōkēn* "maintains a residence," see Notes to Numbers 5:3; Levine 1993:186.

COMMENTS

Three subjects are addressed in the provisions of Numbers 35: (1) laws governing homicide, (2) the enigmatic "Towns of Asylum" (Hebrew *'ārê miq-*

lāṭ), and (3) the Levitical towns. It would be best to begin with discussion of the laws of homicide, and then to examine the role of the Towns of Asylum as a function of the overall judicial system, it being understood that the two themes cannot be dissociated from each other. What unifies them is the role of the clan relative designated *gō'ēl haddām* "the restorer of the blood" (Num 35:12, 19, 21, 24–25, 27), whose recognized, legal legitimacy embodies a concept of retaliation. Finally, there will be comment on Israelite towns, in general, and the Levitical towns, in particular.

COMMENT 1: REQUITING THE DEBIT OF BLOOD

Underlying usage of the word *dām* "blood" (plural *dāmîm*) in biblical criminal law is the notion that blood is the vital fluid that empowers life. Living beings are alive when blood flows within them, and the loss or shedding of their blood brings about their death. Humans and most other living beings emerge from the bloody interior of the mother's body at birth. This definition of life alternates with the idea that it is "the breathing [of the breath] of life" (*nišmat [rûaḥ] ḥayîm*—Gen 2:7, 7:22) that differentiates between the living and the dead. Natural death, which would include death from illness and other causes beyond human control, is of no significance in biblical criminal law, on the human level, although it certainly holds other meanings for the human-divine relationship. Similarly, there are clues to the possible application of criminal behavior to animals in biblical perceptions, and, even more, indications that when humans shed the blood of animals they may be upsetting a balance (Brichto 1976). Thus, the goring ox of Exodus 21:28–32 is tried and executed by stoning for killing a human being (J. J. Finkelstein 1981), and it is only through the special dispensation of Genesis 9:1–4 that humans are permitted to slaughter other living creatures—animals, fish and creeping creatures—for food (Sperling 1992, in *ABD* I:761–763). In two sequential studies, M. Greenberg (1960, 1986) emphasizes the extreme significance of lifeblood in biblical Israel, expressed both in law and lore, and, in fact, cites the law of the goring ox as evidence that the sanctity of human life transcended usual notions of criminal responsibility. In his view, the disallowance of ransom to one who directly caused the death of another, a feature that differentiates biblical from other ancient Near Eastern legal systems, demonstrates this sanctity.

It is, therefore, when one human being causes the death of another, whether or not intent can be established, that death becomes a paramount concern of criminal justice. The victim's blood has been shed (the Hebrew verb *š-p-k*), which upsets what we might call a "natural balance." This imbalance is epitomized in the words of YHWH to Cain: "Hark! Your brother's blood (*demê ʾaḥîkā*) is crying out to me from the earth" (*min hāʾadāmāh*—Gen 4:10). This statement reflects the notion that within the earth, from whence humans, who are made of earth, derive (Gen 2:7, Ps 103:14, Koh 3:20), there is a reservoir of blood, from which some was doled out to the first human and is provided to each human being at birth. This notion is brought out by the prominence afforded to the word *ʾadāmāh* "earth, soil." When a human being eventually dies in a natural way, his blood returns to the earth along with his body, and the blood balance is maintained. If, however, a human being dies as the result of an action by another human who takes away his life (or even, for example, by a goring ox), the natural course of life and death has been upset, and the chthonic reservoir of blood is out of balance; there is a debit of blood that must be requited. Thus, Genesis 9:4–6.

> You must not, however, eat flesh (= of animals) with its lifeblood in it. But I will demand accountability (*ʾedrōš*) for your own lifeblood. I will demand it (*ʾedrešennû*) of every beast; of man, too, will I demand accountability (*ʾedrōš*) for human life, of every man for that of his fellow man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in his image did God make him.

The legal tone of this statement is conveyed by the Hebrew verb *d-r-š* "to demand accountability." This theme is resonated in Psalm 9:13: "For he who demands accountability for blood (*kî dōrēš dāmîm*) is mindful of them; he has not forgotten the outcry of the suffering." The law of Deuteronomy 21:1–9 is intended to assure this very restoration of the blood of the slain to the earth. When the body of a slain person is discovered outside the jurisdictional limits of any town, so that there is little likelihood of identifying his killer and there is no authority to hold directly accountable for the killing, the elders of the nearest town were to proceed to a perennial wadi, there to declare their innocence of responsibility for the crime. The Levitical priests were to break the neck of a heifer ceremoniously, and let its blood run down into the wadi, thereby returning the blood to the earth, and restoring the balance. The blood of the heifer substituted for the blood of the unidentified slayer.

Notwithstanding anomalies in the law of Deuteronomy 21:1–9, and a certain lack of explicitness in projecting the return of the blood of the earth, it is implicit that the location of the ceremony at a perennial wadi was to assure that, indeed, the blood of the heifer would flow down into the earth. The fact that the heifer was not to be slaughtered in the usual ritual manner can be explained in terms of the Deuteronomic doctrine of cult centralization. Sacrifice was not allowable outside the central temple and, as a result, the method of slaughter was altered so as to produce a ceremony in which the Levitical priests could properly participate but that would not compromise Deuteronomic doctrine. This is brought out in the words that the elders were to address God:

> Grant expiation to your people, Israel, whom you have redeemed (*'ăšer pādîtā*), oh YHWH, and do not allow the blood of the innocent to remain in the midst your people, Israel. Let the blood be expiated on their behalf.

The circle has been closed; what the slayer took away has been restored and replenished. It is noteworthy, however, that biblical narratives of the creation of man, and other biblical pronouncements on this subject, do not speak about the supplying of lifeblood to man by God, but only of his formation or sculpting from earth and the breathing of the breath of life into him. This projection differs from statements in the Mesopotamian creation epic, Enuma Elish, for example, which speak of the formation of man from the blood of the slain god, Kingu, the consort of Tiamat in the netherworld, who had fomented rebellion against the heavenly gods, led by Marduk. Thus, Marduk conceives a plan:

> Blood I will mass and cause bones to be.
> I will establish a savage, "man" shall be his name.
> Verily, savage-man I will create. (Speiser 1969:68; Enuma Elish VI, lines 5–7)

Further on, the Igigi "the great gods" inform Marduk that it was Kingu who was responsible for the human uprising:

> "It was Kingu who contrived the uprising,
> And made Tiamat rebel, and joined battle."
> They bound him, holding him before Ea.
> They imposed on him his guilt, and severed his blood (vessels).
> Out of his blood they fashioned mankind. (Speiser 1969a:68; Enuma Elish VI, lines 29–33)

There is nothing comparable to this in biblical creation literature where it is the breath of God, which is the breath of life, that infuses mankind, not the blood of a god. Nonetheless, in other biblical contexts, the theme of blood is actually highlighted in depicting life and death, and guilt and expiation. This suggests that the involvement of blood may have been specifically suppressed in biblical traditions about the creation of man, perhaps in order to reject mythological notions about the blood of the gods as an ingredient of the human creature. But in the prescriptions and rituals associated with criminal law and expiatory sacrifice and purification, biblical traditions clearly express the same notion as do some of the myths of Mesopotamia: The blood of humans derives from their creator, and humans are therefore accountable for its restoration to the subterranean reservoir in the event it has been taken from other living beings unlawfully. Understood phenomenologically, the releasing of the heifer's blood into the wadi is a mirror image of the dashing of sacrificial blood on the sides of the altar, as has been suggested above. Both rituals hark back to polytheistic myths about chthonic deities who inhabit the netherworld and demand the restoration of their lost blood to the earth. This complex of ritual and law represents yet another instance of how selective was the rejection of polytheistic concepts and themes in biblical literature. Alongside the emphatic disallowance of certain notions basic to polytheism was the subtle acceptance of others, whose presence can be detected analytically.

As an example, a key theme in the prayer of Deuteronomy 21 is expressed by the verb *p-d-h* "to redeem, ransom." The idea is that the God of Israel assumes the indebtedness of his people, Israel; he squares their accounts in various situations. They were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and he bought them their freedom (Deut 7:8, Micah 6:4). When they incur collective guilt, he allows them to make substitution, to restore the blood of the slain without paying with their own lives. A synonym of Hebrew *p-d-h* is *g-ʾ-l* "to redeem, restore."

Enter the clan relative known as *gōʾēl haddām* "restorer of the blood." The first references to this clan relative in Torah literature are to be found in Deuteronomy 19, in the law of asylum (Deut 19:5–6, 12). There is also the tale of the wise woman of Tekoa sent by Joab to trick King David into allowing his son, Absalom, to return home (2 Sam 14:1–17). She identifies herself as a widow with two sons, and reports that her two sons were fighting, and that they could not be separated. The result was that one of them killed the other, and the entire clan was demanding that the brother who did the slaying be handed over for execution in retaliation for the life he took. Her plea to the king is particularly revealing:

> Let the king be mindful of YHWH, your God, and [restrain] the restorer of the blood (*gōʾēl haddām*) from excessive destruction, so that they may not bring about the termination of my son. (2 Sam 14:11)

The wording of the tale suggests that the king bore no actual legal responsibility in this matter; that it was an internecine conflict among those related by blood. He was *nāqî* "clear of responsibility" (2 Sam 14:9); it was the consanguineous clan that bore the responsibility of replenishing the blood. However, the grieving mother claimed that clan retaliation would have been excessive in this case because the homicide was not premeditated. We are to infer that in such situations one could appeal to royal authority to intervene, because the throne, as the court of final appeal, was empowered to grant asylum and to render a judgment that would define the crime as unintentional. The legal predicates of this tale are of obvious relevance to the provisions of Numbers 35.

For the rest, explicit references to *gōʾēl haddām* are restricted to Numbers 35, and to spin-offs of Deuteronomy and Numbers in Joshua 20 (see further). It must be understood, in this connection, that the role of the clan relative designated *gōʾēl* was not restricted to blood retaliation. In priestly legislation, represented by Leviticus 25, it involved restoration of family lands lost by indebtedness and default. The same role is epitomized in the symbolic redemption of family land by the prophet Jeremiah (Jer 32:6–15), and as a legal theme in the book of Ruth. Lev 25:49 lists one's uncle and cousin and any other consanguineous relative as duty-bound to act as *gōʾ ēl.*Consanguineous relatives, according to Leviticus 21:2, included one's parents, one's son and daughter, and one's brother.

What the *gōʾēl haddām* would accomplish would be to restore the balance of blood upset by the homicide. That would get the clan off the hook, because in this system, responsibility for the debit of blood was thought to be collective, not individual. The debit of blood was thought to exist whether the shedding of blood had been premeditated or whether it had been accidental on the part of another. Precisely because this was so, it became necessary to introduce legal variables in order to protect killers whose premeditation had not been established, while at the same time freeing clan relatives from the strongly felt duty to retaliate. This observation leads us directly to the legalities of homicide and to the role of the Towns of Asylum.

COMMENT 2: ACCESS TO THE TOWNS OF ASYLUM: DETERMINING INTENTIONALITY

The most basic distinction in biblical criminal law, as in most systems, is the one drawn between premeditated and unintentional homicide. There are, of course, refinements of this distinction that could have been considered, but the principal question of law engaged in Numbers 35 is whether the slayer planned to kill, with prior intent, or whether he killed another accidentally, on the spur of the moment, or in the context of an unanticipated situation. Other variables in the legal equation are (a) causality, the question of whether death resulted directly from the act of another, or whether some other agency, such as an ox in one's possession, stood between the slayer and the victim, thereby breaking the circuit of causality; and (b) the use of weapons and other instruments in committing the crime. What is missing from Numbers 35 is any provision for the total exoneration of the one accused of murder, for a determination that the wrong person had been accused. It is assumed that the one accused is the true perpetrator, the actual homicide. It remained to determine the status of his crime under the law. In Notes to Numbers 35, the terms of reference employed to articulate these distinctions have been clarified. There is, likewise, little need to pursue here the many analogues to biblical law from the ancient Near East that have come to light through comparative research, which has been and continues to be extensive in this area. The reader is referred to the recent study by Greengus (1992, in *ABD* IV:242–252) for a balanced review and for a bibliography of recent literature.

Whenever an Israelite had been killed, his or her clan relatives were more or less duty-bound to retaliate. This customary duty often collided with the functioning of established juridical authorities, who seldom if ever disputed the right of retaliation, but who were committed to justice, namely to the very distinctions drawn in legal codes. In addition to proving the guilt of the accused, courts sought to assess the context of the homicide, and would normally ordain capital punishment in homicide cases only when premeditated murder had been proved through the testimony of witnesses. In other words, courts and other acknowledged judges, such as the king, were committed to qualitative considerations, not exclusively to the quantitative replenishment of the debit of blood. This is the force of the concluding statements of Numbers 35:31–34: Were the courts to allow a premeditated murderer to ransom himself, or one guilty of manslaughter to buy his way out of the town of his asylum, they would be defiling the land by allowing the debit of blood to remain. Such allowances would not put matters right and would not uphold the norm that blood once shed can be expiated only through the blood of its shedder or a blood relative of that person. This norm would be upheld, however, if those guilty only of manslaughter were granted asylum on the basis of judicial determinations as to the severity of their crime. In such cases, even though no blood had been shed in retaliation, the debit of blood is declared to have been requited. To do less would be to allow *dām nāqî* "the blood of the innocent" to go unrestored, but it was not necessary to do more in the way of punishment in order to restore the balance.

The right of asylum derives from the belief that once inside a temple, or holding on to an altar, or once standing within some other sacred environment, a person was immune from apprehension or execution. He was under the protection of the patron deity. This notion of sanctuary points to the cultic matrix of Towns of Asylum, and other such locales or zones, that were located in what were or had once been cult centers. Such locales represent the institutionalization of the right of asylum. It is obvious that a determination as to the nature of the homicide was basic to the granting of asylum. This is brought out in the earliest legal statement on murder and the right of asylum in Exodus 21:12–13, in the Book of the Covenant, a northern Israelite composition that may hark back to the ninth century B.C.E. There we read that God will provide a "place" (Hebrew *māqôm*) to which one who killed another without premeditation may flee, an act conveyed by the Hebrew verb *n-w-s* "to flee," occurring in virtually all biblical statements on the right of asylum. Hebrew *māqôm* may be used synonymously with *ʿîr* "town," as in Deuteronomy 21:19, and in Ruth 4:10, *ʿîr* is parallel with *šaʿar meqômô* "the gate of his *māqôm.*" The term *māqôm* also bears the nuance of "cult site," and this is especially so in northern Israelite, including Deuteronomic, sources. This statement of law is immediately followed by a rule excluding the premeditated murderer from the right of asylum: "From my very altar must you apprehend him to face death."

In practical terms, one would expect that a person who had killed another might normally claim that his act had not been premeditated and seek asylum so as to allow the court, or the king, or some other authority to arrive at an evidentiary determination. In fact, any murderer might normally attempt flight to a place of asylum. That the protection afforded by asylum was not always upheld in practice is brought out in several biblical narratives. Solomon gave orders to seize Adonijah, his brother and rival to the throne, and also Joab, David's general, and have them put to death even though each had gained access to the temple altar (1 Kings 1:50–51, 2:28). David sought refuge from Saul in Nob, "the town of priests" (*ʿîr hakkōhanîm*) most likely because it was, in fact, a Town of Asylum. While there, David was safe, but once he left Nob, Saul had the priest of that cult center, Ahimelek, and his fellow priests killed for giving aid and comfort to David, his enemy.

A. Rofé (1986) has correctly noted that the designation of specific towns as Towns of Asylum, first ordained in Deuteronomy 19:1–13, most likely a mid-eighth century B.C.E. source of northern Israelite derivation, is the direct consequence of the Deuteronomic doctrine of cult centralization, expounded in Deuteronomy 12–16. Moses was to set apart towns within the land where the homicide might flee. The country is to be divided into three sectors, and a Town of Asylum is to be designated in each sector. If Israelite territory was extended, three additional towns would be designated to meet the need. This system of noncultic Towns of Asylum had been unnecessary when a network of legitimate cult sites operated in the Israelite land, the very situation reflected in the Book of the Covenant. When, however, it became official policy that there was to be only one legitimate cult site, it became necessary to provide specific towns to which the homicide might flee, because the distance to the central temple might, in many cases, make access to asylum difficult, or virtually impossible.

This realistic change is reflected in Deuteronomy 4:1–3, which names the towns that Moses had set aside in Transjordan, a reality not envisioned in core Deuteronomy. The distribution is schematic, with one town in the Moabite Mishor, namely, Betser, in the territory of Reuben, one in Ramoth in Gilead, within the territory of Gad, and one in Golan-Bashan of the Manassites. It is somewhat ironic that the towns selected under the Deuteronomic policy, echoed by the Deuteronomist, may have had a history as legitimate cult sites at an earlier time. In fact, they may have continued to operate, but cultic references are consistently avoided in Deuteronomy precisely in order to deny them legitimacy. In summary, it can be stated that the right of asylum is cultic in origin, and that changes in the allocation of sacred space created the need to adapt the asylum system, affording new venues of access.

Enter Numbers 35, which arguably may be dated to the Achaemenid Period. Since the priestly school accepted the Deuteronomic doctrine of cult centralization, any cult sites that had operated in the designated towns would have become illegitimate. Nevertheless, the historic nexus between towns of asylum and cult sites survives in a new form: The administration of the six designated towns of asylum was assigned to the Levites, and, in fact, these towns were to be selected from among the forty-eight Levitical towns, themselves. Their design recalls the provisions of Leviticus 25:29–34, as will be discussed further on. In effect, Numbers 35 combines the provisions of the earlier statements, and adds the mitigating provision that upon the death of the High Priest an amnesty would be declared, allowing inmates of the Towns of Asylum to return to their family estates.

Further elaboration is found in Joshua 20, another late source, and in Joshua 21, that records the distribution of the Levitical towns in detail. The fleeing homicide was to make a declaration at the town gate before the elders, who would then "Gather him into the town and provide him with a residence." The verb used is *ʾ-s-p* "to gather in," a synonym of the less frequent verb, *q-l-ṭ*, from which the term *ʿārê miqlāṭ* "towns of asylum" derives. Interestingly, Joshua 20 complements Deuteronomy 4:1–3 by adding the names of three Cisjordanian Towns of Asylum: Kedesh in Galilee, Shechem in the Ephraimite hills and Hebron in the Judean hill country. One assumes that any town named Kedesh (or Kadesh) was so named because of the presence of a temple, or cult site, and both Shechem and Hebron certainly had been cult centers. Joshua 20:9 uses a unique term, *ʿārê hammûʿadāh* "assembly towns," which may indicate religious assemblies not necessarily held in or around temples. Finally, 1 Chronicles 6:42–45, most likely from the fourth century B.C.E., lists thirteen towns of asylum that were granted to the descendants of Aaron, the High Priest. Included are Hebron, Anathoth, Debir and Beth-Shemesh, some of whose names attest to the presence of a temple at some period.

A point not clarified in the biblical sources is where the trial of the fleeing homicide would be held. From the wording of Numbers 35:24–25, and from its restatement in Joshua 20:6, both of which speak of returning the fleeing homicide to his Town of Asylum after being declared not guilty of premeditated murder, it is to be inferred that he would be taken either to a central court, or to his own hometown, both provided for in the legislation of Deuteronomy 17. It may be worth mentioning that the need for zones of protected asylum is not eliminated by the operation of judicial agencies, or what we call "the rule of law." The argument that the Towns of Asylum, as outlined in Deuteronomy and Numbers, represent very early features of biblical society is contradicted by evidence from many societies indicating that vendettas persist even where courts and prosecutors are busy at work.

COMMENT 3:

LEVITICAL TOWNS AND ORDINARY TOWNS IN BIBLICAL ISRAEL

As indicated, our information concerning Levitical towns and Towns of Asylum comes from Deuteronomy 4 and 19, from Numbers 35, from Joshua 20 and 21, from 1 Chronicles 6 and from the plan for the rebuilt Jerusalem preserved in Ezekiel 45 and 48. There is a complex of biblical traditions in which the extramural *migrāš* figures prominently. This complex begins in Leviticus 25:29–33 with laws about urban real estate versus rural arable land. Not only the towns of the Levites were owned by them collectively, but also their *migrāšîm*, outside the towns. Neither the Levitical urban dwellings nor their *migrāšîm* could be purchased or pledged, to start with. In the case of other Israelites, there was one law for urban dwellings and another for dwellings in *ḥaṣērîm* "unwalled settlements," considered to be arable land, and as such subject to sale and pledge for debt. But, as for the Levites, all that they held outside of their towns were *migrāšîm*, referred to as *śedēh migraš ʿārêhêm* "the fields of their town plots" (Lev 25:34), and these could never be sold or pledged.

The provisions of Leviticus 25:9–33 may be clarified by reference to 1 Chronicles 6:39–41. After listing the descendants of Aaron, the priest, the text proceeds to record where they lived:

> And these are their settlements, by their circular enclosures, within their borders . . . They were granted Hebron, in the territory of Judah, together with its own town plots (*migrāšîm*) all around it. But the field

> adjacent to the town and its unwalled settlements (*ḥaṣērîm*) they granted to Caleb, son of Jephunneh.

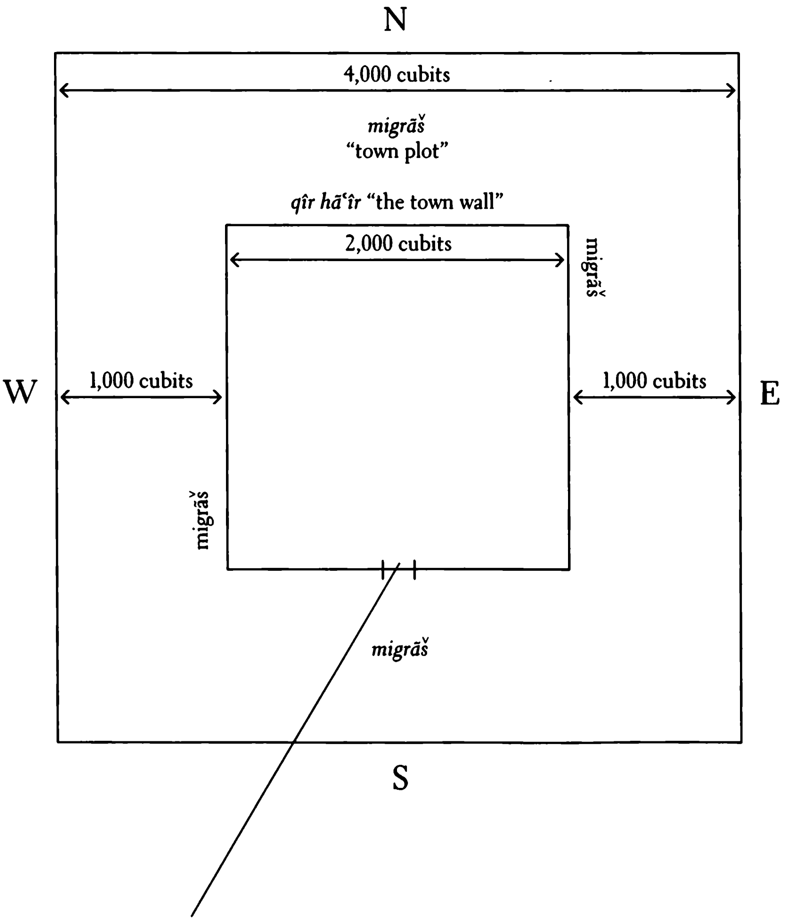
This more or less accords with Leviticus 25:29–33, in that *ḥaṣērîm* belong to the arable lands of the tribes, in the present case, the estate of Caleb, whereas the town of Hebron, including its *migrāšîm*, belonged to the priests.

It appears that the pairing of *ʿîr* and *migrāš* occurs almost consistently in sources pertaining to Levitical towns and Towns of Asylum. Biblical writers found this model applicable to the role of the Levites and to the administration of a regime of Towns of Asylum. And yet, the phenomenon of the *migrāš* was more general, and genuinely realistic. 1 Chronicles 5:16 speaks of "all the *migrāšîm* of Sharon," in a context unrelated to Levitical towns. The biblical term *migrāš* has been compared to Akkadian *tawwertum/tamirtu* "surrounding area, surrounding field," designating arable areas in the environs of towns (*CAD* A I:380–381, s.v. *ālu*, I, 4, b "surroundings of the city"). Whoever gave us Ezekiel 45 and 48 utilized the same model of a town, surrounded by *migrāšîm*, as projected in Numbers 35:1–8, for the rebuilt Jerusalem, with the Temple at its center and *migrāšîm* all around.

It may be more precise, however, to understand *ʿîr* in the composite term *ʿir miqlat* "Town of Asylum" as referring to a quarter within the town, not to the entire town in question. In 2 Kings 10:25, *ʿîr bêt habbaʿal* is best understood as "the quarter of the Baal temple," located within the town of Samaria. This conclusion is endorsed by the Temple Scroll of the early- to mid-second century B.C.E., where the term *ʿîr hammiqdāš* "Temple City" identifies the temple quarter of Jerusalem, not the entire city (Levine 1979). Such an interpretation correlates with what is known of the welfare role of ancient temples. Fugitives granted asylum were probably lodged in a special quarter of town, near the temple, or, in later times, near an agency run by priests or Levites charged with attending to them. Forced residence in a Town of Asylum, so defined, was a form of detention. Such fugitives may have been put to work, for all we know. The experience of the fugitive may have resembled that of the indentured servant compelled to reside on the estate of his creditor and constrained from returning to his home and family. The indentured "slave" worked on the farm while the fugitive worked in a town, where he could be protected, but also incarcerated. It is possible that the Nethinim, about whom we read in Ezra-Nehemiah, and who corresponded in name and function to the *širkūtu* of Neo-Babylonian temples, had some function associated with the asylum quarters, as the Levites most assuredly had in the Achaemenid Period (Levine 1963).

In conclusion, biblical traditions on the Towns of Asylum and the Levitical towns, if traced carefully, with the factor of realism in mind, indicate that asylum was associated with temples and cult centers. In later times, when cultic functions in Israel became more concentrated, priests and Levites, who still resided in special towns, continued to attend to the management of fugitive asylum, perhaps not only for homicide but, as well, for differing categories of fugitives from justice and government. In Judea of Achaemenid times, there were apparently no rivals to the Temple of Jerusalem, but in Shechem stood the Samaritan temple. Perhaps Joshua 20:7 should be taken seriously in registering a Town of Asylum in Shechem!

FIGURE 2: THE PLAN OF THE TOWNS OF ASYLUM


N
4,000 cubits
migrāš
"town plot"
qîr hā'îr "the town wall"
2,000 cubits
migrāš
W
1,000 cubits
1,000 cubits
E
migrāš
migrāš
S

{Incidental reference to *ša'ar* "gate" in Jos 20:4. Location unspecified}

Scriptural References:
Num 34:1–8; Jos 20:4; Jos 21;
Lev 25; Ezek 45:2, 48:17; 1 Chron 6.

PART XIII.

NUMBERS 36: TRIBAL ENDOGAMY AND LAND TENURE

◆

INTRODUCTION

Numbers 36 would appear to be an addendum to the Book of Numbers, introduced for the purpose of qualifying the legalities of Numbers 27:1–11 on the matter of inheritance. There, it had been provided that a man's daughter would inherit his land if he died without leaving a son. Redundantly, Numbers 36 takes note of the possible consequences of this ruling: When a daughter inherits her father's *naḥalāh* because he left no sons, this did not mean that from then on the territory in question would be handed down through the maternal line. Rather, it would be inherited by that daughter's son, and then through the male succession. Inheritance by the daughter would be a one-time anomaly. Now, were a daughter who fell heir to her father's land to be married to an Israelite of another tribe, and bear him a son, and if that son eventually inherited the land, it would become part of the territory of the other tribe, the father's tribe. In this way, territories would be transferred from one tribe to another, and this would upset the divinely ordained plan for dividing the Promised Land among the tribes of Israel, as set forth in Numbers 33:50–34:29. For this reason, a daughter who falls heir to her father's ancestral territory is required to marry a man from a clan affiliated with her own tribe. This would guarantee that the land she inherited would be retained within the tribe.

In other words, Numbers 36 adjusts the provisions of Numbers 27 in the light of the land allocation system stipulated in Numbers 32 and Numbers 34. Given the overall policy of patrilineal inheritance, territory could be retained within the tribe down through the generations only if female heirs practiced tribal endogamy. In the Comments to Numbers 27, it was explained just how the dispensation to the daughters of Zelophehad fits into the unique situation of the tribe of Manasseh, the only tribe to settle both to the east and to the west of the Jordan.

Accordingly, Numbers 36 may be outlined as follows:

Numbers 36:1–4—A statement of the problem created by allowing daughters to inherit their fathers' property, as presented in Numbers 27:1–11.
Numbers 36:5–9—A statement of the requirement of tribal endogamy for heiresses.
Numbers 36:10–12—The compliance of Zelophehad's daughters.
Numbers 36:13—A postscript.

TRANSLATION

36 [1]The heads of the patriarchal "houses" of the clan of the sons of Gilead, son of Machir, son of Manasseh, of the Josephite clans came forward, and stated [their case] before Moses and before the tribal chieftains, the heads of the patriarchal "houses" of Israel.

[2]They said: "YHWH commanded my lord to grant the land as ancestral territory to the Israelite people by lot, yet my lord was [also] commanded by YHWH to grant the ancestral territory of Zelophehad, our brother, to his daughters.

[3]"Now, were they to be married to anyone affiliated with the other Israelite tribes, their ancestral territory would be subtracted from our ancestral territory and would be annexed to the ancestral territory of the tribe into which they married, thereby being subtracted from the ancestral territory apportioned to us by lot.

[4]"Now, even though the Jubilee will occur for the Israelites, the ancestral territory [of these] would be annexed to the ancestral territory of that tribe into which they married. Their ancestral territory would thus be subtracted from our ancestral territory."

[5]Thereupon, Moses issued the following command to the Israelite people by order of YHWH: "The tribe of the Josephites speak correctly.

[6]"This is the word that YHWH has commanded regarding Zelophehad's daughters: They may be married to whomsoever suits them, so long as they marry into a clan belonging to their father's tribe.

[7]"An ancestral territory may not be transferred from one tribe to another. Rather, each of the Israelites must maintain a hold on the ancestral territory of his own tribe.

[8]"Any daughter inheriting an ancestral territory, from among the Israelite tribes, may only marry a person from a clan affiliated with her father's tribe, in order that each of the Israelites may retain possession of his own ancestral territory.

[9]"An ancestral territory may not be transferred from one tribe to another; rather, each of the Israelites must maintain a hold on his own ancestral territory."

[10]Zelophehad's daughters did precisely as YHWH commanded Moses.

[11]Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah and Noah, daughters of Zelophehad, were married to cousins of theirs.

[12]They were married to men from the clans of the sons of Manasseh, son of Joseph, so that their ancestral territory remained the property of a clan affiliated with their father's tribe.

[13]These are the commandments and the judicial regulations that YHWH commanded, through Moses, to the Israelite people in the Plains of Moab, across the Jordan from Jericho.

NOTES TO NUMBERS 36: AN AMENDMENT TO AN EARLIER RULING

1. The leaders of Zelophehad's own clan of the tribe of Manasseh (cf. Num 27:1) approached Moses with their concerns over the future status of

ancestral land pursuant to the rulings of Numbers 27:1–11. They refer to Zelophehad as *'aḥînû* "our kinsman" in the next verse, Numbers 36:2. They are logically the ones who would be most concerned. The term *rā'šê 'ābôt* "heads of patriarchal families" seems to represent an abbreviation of *rā'šê bêt 'abôt* (cf. Exod 6:14 with Exod 6:25 and Num 31:26 with Num 7:2). This term also occurs in 1 Chronicles 7:11, 2 Chronicles 19:8, Ezra 2:68//Nehemiah 7:71. There are other combinations in use, such as *rā'šê 'abôt hammaṭṭôt* "the patriarchal heads of the tribes" (Num 32:28, Jos 21:1), and *rā'šê 'abôt hā'ēdāh* "the patriarchal heads of the community" (Num 3:26). It appears that the nomenclature is flexible at this point. In the present verse, the *rā'šê 'abôt* of the "clans" (*mispāḥôt*) of the tribe of Manasseh appeared before Moses and the chieftains (*neśi'im*) of the Israelites. But as we read on, the *neśi'îm* themselves are designated *rā'šê 'ābôt!* The term *mispāḥāḥ* "clan" would appear to be quite stable, however. The Gileadite heads were from among the Josephite clans (see Notes to Num 1:2; Levine 1993:130–133; J. Weinberg 1992).

2. *"YHWH commanded my lord . . . yet my lord was [also] commanded."* Two things have happened: The land has been allotted to the Israelites, tribe by tribe as specified in Numbers 34. This was done in compliance with a specific divine command (Num 34:1, 18, 29). Clearly, this allocation was meant to be permanent, and each tribe was to retain all of its allotted *naḥalāh* "territory, inheritance." And yet, there was a second development that potentially conflicted with this apportionment of the land: Numbers 27:1–11 command Moses to allow the daughters of Zelophehad to inherit his *naḥalāh* within the tribe of Manasseh. Now, women who married outside their tribe would join their husbands' tribe. It is this eventuality that Numbers 36 comes to address. The syntax of the statement *wa' adōnî ṣuwwāh be-YHWH* "and yet my lord was commanded by YHWH" is somewhat unusual, even so the Pual of the verb *ṣ-w-h* "to command" is attested, mostly in priestly writings (Exod 34:34, Lev 8:35, 10:13, Num 3:16, and in Ezekiel 12:7, 24:18, 37:7; but note its occurrence in Gen 45:19 [JE]).

3. *"Now were they to be married."* The statement is redundant, but of obvious meaning. Resonating with the diction of Numbers 27:4, in speaking repeatedly of subtracting (the verb *yiggāra'*), and then of adding (*wenôsāp*), the present verse spells out the anticipated problem: Zelophehad's clan and tribe might lose some of its territory under the provisions of the new ruling. Idiomatic *hāyāh le-X le'iššāh* "to become one's wife," here phrased in the plural, is well attested (Gen 20:12, 24:67, Deut 22:19, 29, 24:4).

4. *"Now, even though the Jubilee will occur for the Israelites."* The verse is unclear as stated, particularly the sense of the Hebrew *we'im yihyeh hayyōbēl,* which has been translated: "Even though the Jubilee will occur." For one thing, the force of the verb *hāyāh* seems here to be fuller or more active than usual. It means "to happen, occur," not simply "to be." This meaning is most evident in late biblical usage, as in Jonah 4:5, Koheleth 6:12, 11:2, and Daniel 8:19, and may be due to the influence of Aramaic.

The force of conditional *weʾim* also requires clarification. It seems to express a qualifying, virtually "contrary to fact" condition, projecting a negative outcome: "even if, even though." Cf. *ʾim yittēn lî Bālāq* "Even though Balak gave me; even if Balak were to give me" (Num 22:18; 24:13). Or Deuteronomy 30:4: *ʾim yihyeh niddāḥakā biqṣēh haššāmāyim* "Even though your castoffs be at the end of the heavens." Or Isaiah 1:18: "Even though your offenses be as scarlet (*ʾim yiḥyû ḥaṭṭāʾêkem kaššānî*)." Also cf. 1 Kings 13:8, Amos 9:2, Obadiah 4–5. On this basis, the present verse would mean that even though the Jubilee is scheduled to occur, that event would not affect the status of land inherited by daughters under the provisions of Numbers 27:1–11.

The laws of the Jubilee are set forth in Leviticus 25:8–16, and are supplemented by further specifics in Leviticus 27:16–24. Uniformly, the Jubilee affects *ʾaḥuzzāh* land that is transferred to another through sale, resulting from default on debt payment in cases when land was used as security, or, in certain circumstances, through donation to the Temple. In such cases as provided for by the law, land so transferred would revert to its original owners on the occasion of the Jubilee. However, the laws of the Jubilee do not cover inheritance, so that ancestral land once lost to the tribe or clan through inheritance would be irretrievable. This anticipates the need for endogamy, since inheritance proceeds along the male line.

5–6. *"The tribe of the Josephites speak correctly."* Resonating with the precise diction of Numbers 27:7, the present verse affirms the validity of the concern shown by the heads of the Gileadite clans of Manasseh, and of their reasoning. An additional restrictive ruling is issued to the daughters of Zelophehad. The formula *zeh haddābār ʾašer ṣiwwāh YHWH* "This is the word that YHWH has commanded" is typical of priestly composition, especially in introducing provisions of law and ritual (Exod 16:16, 32, 35:4, Lev 8:5, 9:16, 17:2, Num 30:2). The pronominal suffixes—*beʿênêhem*, literally "in their sight," and *ʾabîhem* "their father"—are masculine, even though the antecedents are feminine. Idiomatic *ṭôb beʿênê* "good in the sight of," connotes suitability or desirability; what is agreeable (1 Sam 11:10, 29:6, 1 Kings 21:2). Verbally, this thought would be expressed as *wayyîṭab . . . beʿênê* "It was agreeable, acceptable" (Jos 22:30, 2 Sam 3:36).

7. *"An ancestral territory may not be transferred."* The key verb in this verse is *s-b-b* "to encircle, revolve, circumvent," here translated "to be transferred," because a change of ownership is implied. The closest we come to the present meaning is in Jeremiah 6:12: *wenāsabbû battêhem laʾaḥērîm* "And their homes shall be transferred to others." Reference there is to the forcible transfer of property as a result of conquest. It may be significant that in Numbers 34:1–15, within the description of the land to be apportioned, the verb *nāsab* "to encircle" is used to describe the demarcation of borders (Num 34:4, 5). The provisions of the present verse are repeated almost verbatim in verse 9, below.

The verb *d-b-q* "to cleave, adhere" means "to hold onto"—the land; not to allow it to be transferred out of the clan and tribe. The usage is a bit unusual.

8. This verse is self-explanatory, although the idiom is a bit irregular. It states the rule of endogamy. The verb *y-r-š* "to inherit, come into possession of," enjoys two related nuances. Participial *yōrešet* conveys the act of inheriting, as when the daughter inherits her father's estate, whereas *lemaʿan yiršû benê Yiśrāʾēl* expresses a further phase in the process: "in order that each of the Israelites may retain possession of—."

9. Verse 9 restates verse 7, above.

10–12. The daughters of Zelophehad complied. They, in fact, married their cousins from other clans of Manasseh, so that, at least, the land would pass down through their father's tribe. The families of these very cousins were the ones who first expressed concern.

13. *These are the commandments.* For the precise meaning of *ʿarbōt Môʾab* see the Notes to Numbers 22:1. There, the wording is a bit different: *mēʿēber le-Yardēn Yerēḥô* "across from the Jordan at Jericho," namely, where the Jordan flows past Jericho, (cf. Num 34:15), instead of the more frequent *ʿal Yardēn Yerēḥô,* as it appears here (cf. Num 26:3, 63), but the sense is the same. Since the arrival of the Israelites at the Jordan facing Jericho is first recorded in Numbers 22:1, and the Balaam Pericope immediately followed, it would appear that the present postscript covers all that transpired and was commanded in Numbers 25–36. For similar superscriptions and postscripts containing the priestly compliance formula, cf. Exodus 35:1, Leviticus 8:36, 26:46, 27:34, and Numbers 30:17.

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